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ESSAYS  
ON  
CHIVALRY, ROMANCE,  
AND  
THE DRAMA.

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*THE "CHANDOS CLASSICS."*

# ESSAYS

ON

CHIVALRY, ROMANCE,

AND

THE DRAMA.

SIR WALTER SCOTT, BART.,

AUTHOR OF "LIVES OF EMINENT NOVELISTS AND DRAMATISTS."



LONDON:  
**FREDERICK WARNE AND CO.**  
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## PUBLISHER'S PREFACE.

THOUGH Sir WALTER SCOTT's chief fame depends on his immortal Novels, his Essays deservedly hold a high place in our national Literature. Of those here presented to the Reader, "Chivalry, Romance, and the Drama," appeared first in the *Encyclopædia Britannica*; that on Amadis de Gaul in an early number of the *Edinburgh Review*; the *Foreign Quarterly* was indebted to him for the others; one of which, that on Masaniello, is reprinted here, we believe, for the first time.

In their present form we think they will form a welcome addition to the Home Library of many families.





## ESSAY ON CHIVALRY.

THE primitive sense of this well-known word, derived from the French *Chevalier*, signifies merely cavalry, or a body of soldiers serving on horseback ; and has been used in that general acceptation by the best of our poets, ancient and modern, from Milton to Thomas Campbell.

But the present article respects the peculiar meaning given to the word in modern Europe, as applied to the order of knighthood, established in almost all her kingdoms during the middle ages, and the laws, rules, and customs, by which it was governed. Those laws and customs have long been antiquated, but their effects may still be traced in European manners ; and, excepting only the change which flowed from the introduction of the Christian religion, we know no cause which has produced such general and permanent difference betwixt the ancients and moderns, as that which has arisen out of the institution of chivalry. In attempting to treat this curious and important subject, rather as philosophers than as antiquaries, we cannot, however, avoid going at some length into the history and origin of the institution.

From the time that cavalry becomes used in war, the horseman who furnishes and supports a charger arises, in all countries, into a person of superior importance to the mere foot-soldier. The apparent difficulty of the art of training and managing in the field of battle an animal so spirited and active, gave the ἵπποδαμος ἑκτορ or *Domitur equi*, in rude ages, a character of superior gallantry, while the necessary expense attending this mode of service attested his superior wealth. In various military nations, therefore, we find that horsemen are distinguished as an order in the state ; and need only appeal to the *equites* of ancient Rome as a body interposed betwixt the senate and the people, or to the laws of the conquerors of New Spain, which assigned a double portion of spoil to the soldier who fought on horseback, in support of a proposition in itself very obvious. But, in the middle ages, the distinction ascribed to soldiers serving on horseback assumed a very peculiar and imposing character. They were not merely respected on account of their wealth or military skill, but were bound together by a union of a very peculiar character, which monarchs were ambitious to share with the poorest of their subjects, and governed by laws directed to enhance, into enthusiasm, the mili-

tary spirit and the sense of personal honour associated with it. The aspirants to this dignity were not permitted to assume the sacred character of knighthood until after a long and severe probation, during which they practised, as acolytes, the virtues necessary to the order of Chivalry. Knighthood was the goal to which the ambition of every noble youth turned; and to support its honours, which (in theory at least) could only be conferred on the gallant, the modest, and the virtuous, it was necessary he should spend a certain time in a subordinate situation, attendant upon some knight of eminence, observing the conduct of his master, as what must in future be the model of his own, and practising the virtues of humility, modesty, and temperance, until called upon to display those of a higher order.

The general practice of assigning some precise period when youths should be admitted into the society of the manhood of their tribe, and considered as entitled to use the privileges of that more mature class is common to many primitive nations. The custom, also, of marking the transition from the one state to the other, by some peculiar formality and personal ceremonial, seems so very natural, that it is quite unnecessary to multiply instances, or crowd our pages with the barbarous names of the nations by whom it has been adopted. In the general and abstract definition of Chivalry, whether as comprising a body of men whose military service was on horseback, and who were invested with peculiar honours and privileges, or with reference to the mode and period in which these distinctions and privileges were conferred, there is nothing either original or exclusively proper to our Gothic ancestors. It was in the singular tenets of Chivalry,—in the exalted, enthusiastic, and almost sanctimonious, ideas connected with its duties,—in the singular balance which its institutions offered against the evils of the rude ages in which it arose, that we are to seek those peculiarities which render it so worthy of our attention.

The original institution of Chivalry has been often traced to the custom of the German tribes recorded by Tacitus. "All business," says the historian, "whether public or private, is transacted by the citizens under arms. But it is not the custom that any one shall assume the military dress or weapons without the approbation of the state. For this purpose, one of the chief leaders, or the father or nearest relation of the youthful candidate, introduces him into the assembly, and confers on him publicly a buckler and javelin. These arms form the dress proper to manhood, and are the first honour conferred on youth. Before he receives them, the young man is but a member of his own family, but after this ceremony he becomes a part of the state itself."\* The records of the northern nations, though we cannot rely upon their authenticity with the same unlimited confidence, because we conceive most of the legends relating to them have been

\* *Germania Taciti.*

written at a much later period than the times in which the scene is laid, may be referred to in confirmation of the Roman historians. The Scandinavian legends and *Sagas* are full of the deeds of those warriors whom they termed heroes or champions, and who appear to have been formed into an order somewhat resembling that of Chivalry, and certainly followed the principal and most characteristic employment of its profession; wandering from court to court, and from shore to shore, bound on high adventure, and seeking, with equal readiness, their fortunes in love and in war. It would not be difficult to deduce from this very early period some of those peculiar habits and customs, which, brought by the Gothic conquerors into the provinces of the divided empire of Rome, subsisted and became ingrafted upon the institutions of Chivalry. Tacitus, for example, informs us, that among the Germans, and, especially among the Catti, every youthful champion permitted his beard and hair to grow, and did not shave them until he had performed some signal feat of arms. In the like manner, as the general reader may have learned from that irrefragable authority, Don Quixote de la Mancha, a knight who received his order was obliged to wear white armour, and a shield without a device, until, by some daring and distinguished achievement, he had acquired title to an honourable badge of distinction. If this correspondence of customs shall be thought too far-fetched, and too general, the next, which we also derive from Tacitus, is too close to be disputed. The German warriors, who piqued themselves upon this bravery, used, at the commencement of a war, to assume an iron ring, after the fashion of a shackle, upon their arm, which they did not remove until they had slain an enemy. The reader may be pleased to peruse the following instance of a similar custom from the French romance of *Jehan de Saintre*, written in the year 1459, and supposed to be founded, in a great measure, upon real incidents.\* The hero, with nine companions at arms, four of whom were knights, and five squires vowed to carry a helmet of a particular shape, that of the knights having a visor of gold, and that of the squires a visor of silver. Thus armed, they were to travel from court to court for the space of three years, defying the like number of knights and squires, wherever they came, to support the beauty of their mistresses with sword and lance. The emblems of their enterprise were chained to their left shoulders, nor could they be delivered of them until their vow was honourably accomplished. Their release took place at the court of

\* We may here observe, once for all, that we have no hesitation in quoting the romances of chivalry as good evidence of the laws and customs of knighthood. The authors, like the painters of the period, invented nothing, but, copying the manners of the age in which they lived, transferred them, without doubt or scruple, to the period and personages of whom they treated. But the romance of *Jehan de Saintre* is still more authentic evidence, as it is supposed to contain no small measure of fact, though disguised and distorted. Probably the achievement of the Polish knights may have been a real incident.

the Emperor of Germany, after a solemn tournament, and was celebrated with much triumph. In like manner, in the same romance, a Polish knight, called the Seigneur de Loiselench, is described as appearing at the court of Paris wearing a light gold chain attached to his wrist and ankle in token of a vow, which emblem of bondage he had sworn to wear for five years, until he should find some knight or squire without reproach, by encountering with whom he might be *delivered* (such was the phrase) of his vow and enterprise. Lord Herbert of Cherbury mentions, in his memoirs, that when he was made Knight of the Bath, a tassel of silken cordage was attached to the mantle of the order, which, doubtless, had originally the same signification as the shackle worn by the German champion. The rule was, however, so far relaxed, that the knot was unloosed so soon as a lady of rank gaged her word that the new Knight of the Bath would do honour to the order; and Lord Herbert, whose punctilious temper set great store by the niceties of chivalrous ceremony, fails not to record, with becoming gratitude, the name of the honourable dame who became his security on this important occasion.

Other instances might be pointed out, in which the ancient customs of the Gothic tribes may be traced in the history of Chivalry; but the above are enough to prove that the seeds of that singular institution existed in the German forests, though they did not come to maturity until the destruction of the Roman empire, and the establishment of the modern states of Europe upon its ruins.

Having thus given a general view of the origin of chivalry, we will, I. briefly notice the causes from which it drew its peculiar characters, and the circumstances in which it differs so widely from the martial character as it existed, either among the ancient Greeks and Romans, or in other countries and nations. II. We will attempt a general abstract of its institutions. III. The rise and progress of chivalry,—its effects upon the political state of Europe,—and its decay and extinction, will close the article.

I. Agreeably to this general division, the general nature and spirit of the institution of chivalry falls first under our consideration.

In every age and country valour is held in esteem, and the more rude the period and the place, the greater respect is paid to boldness of enterprise and success in battle. But it was peculiar to the institution of chivalry, to blend military valour with the strongest passions which actuate the human mind, the feelings of devotion and those of love. The Greeks and Romans fought for liberty or for conquest, and the knights of the middle ages for God and for their ladies. Loyalty to their sovereigns was a duty also incumbent upon these warriors; but although a powerful motive, and by which they often appear to have been strongly actuated, it entered less warmly into the composition of the chivalrous principle than the two preceding causes. Of

patriotism, considered as a distinct predilection to the interests of one kingdom, we find comparatively few traces in the institutions of knight-hood. But the love of personal freedom, and the obligation to maintain and defend it in the persons of others as in their own, was a duty particularly incumbent on those who attained the honour of chivalry. Generosity, gallantry, and an unblemished reputation, were no less necessary ingredients in the character of a perfect knight. He was not called upon simply to practise these virtues when opportunity offered, but to be sedulous and unwearied in searching for the means of exercising them, and to push them without hesitation to the brink of extravagance, or even beyond it. Founded on principles so pure, the order of chivalry could not, in the abstract at least, but occasion a pleasing, though a romantic development of the energies of human nature. But as, in actual practice, every institution becomes deteriorated and degraded, we have too much occasion to remark, that the devotion of the knights often degenerated into superstition,—their love into licentiousness,—their spirit of loyalty or of freedom into tyranny and turmoil,—their generosity and gallantry into harebrained madness and absurdity.

We have mentioned devotion as a principal feature in the character of chivalry. At what remote period the forms of chivalry were first blended with those of the Christian religion, would be a long and difficult inquiry. The religion which breathes nothing but love to our neighbour and forgiveness of injuries, was not, in its primitive purity, easily transferable into the warlike and military institutions of the Goths, the Franks, and the Saxons. At its first infusion, it appeared to soften the character of the people among whom it was introduced so much, as to render them less warlike than their heathen neighbours. Thus the pagan Danes ravaged England when inhabited by the Christian Saxons,—the heathen Normans conquered Neustria from the Franks,—the converted Goths were subdued by the sword of the heathen Huns,—the Visigoths of Spain fell before the Saracens. But the tide soon turned. As the necessity of military talent and courage became evident, the Christian religion was used by its ministers (justly and wisely so far as respected self-defence) as an additional spur to the temper of the valiant. These books of the Old Testament which Uphilas declined to translate, because they afforded too much fuel for the military zeal of the ancient Goths, were now commented upon to animate the sinking courage of their descendants. Victory and glory on earth, and a happy immortality after death, were promised to those champions who should distinguish themselves in battle against the infidels. And who shall blame the preachers who held such language, when it is remembered that the Saracens had at one time nearly possessed themselves of Aquitaine, and that but for the successful valour of Charles Martel, Pepin, and Charlemagne, the crescent might have

dispossessed the cross of the fairest portion of Europe? The fervent sentiments of devotion which direct men's eyes toward heaven, were then justly invoked to unite with those which are most valuable on earth,—the love of our country and its liberties.

But the Romish clergy, who have in all ages possessed the wisdom of serpents, if they sometimes have fallen short of the simplicity of doves, saw the advantage of converting this temporary zeal, which animated the warriors of their creed against the invading infidels, into a permanent union of principles, which should blend the ceremonies of religious worship with the military establishment of the ancient Goths and Germans. The admission of the noble youth to the practice of arms was no longer a mere military ceremony, where the sword or javelin was delivered to him in presence of the prince or elders of his tribe; it became a religious rite, sanctified by the forms of the church which he was in future to defend. The novice had to watch his arms in a church or chapel, or at least on hallowed ground, the night before he had received the honour of knighthood. He was made to assume a white dress, in imitation of the Neophytes of the church. Fast and confession were added to vigils; the purification of the bath was imposed on the military acolyte, in imitation of the initiatory rite of Christianity; and he was attended by god-fathers, who became security for his performing his military vows, as sponsors had formerly appeared for him at baptism. In all points of ceremonial, the investiture of chivalry was brought to resemble, as nearly as possible, the administration of the sacraments of the church. The ceremony itself was performed, where circumstances would admit, in a church or cathedral, and the weapons with which the young warrior was invested were previously blessed by the priest. The oath of chivalry bound the knight to defend the rights of the holy church, and to respect religious persons and institutions, and to obey the precepts of the Gospel. Nay, more, so intimate was the union betwixt chivalry and religion esteemed to be, that the several gradations of the former were seriously considered as parallel to those of the church, and the knight was supposed to resemble the bishop in rank, duties, and privileges. At what period this infusion of religious ceremonial into an order purely military first commenced, and when it became complete and perfect, would be a curious but a difficult subject of investigation. Down to the reign of Charlemagne, and somewhat lower, the investiture was of a nature purely civil, but long before the time of the *crusades*, it had assumed the religious character we have described.

The effect which this union of religious and military zeal was likely to produce in every other case, save that of defensive war, could not but be unfavourable to the purity of the former. The knight, whose profession was war, being solemnly enlisted in the service of the gospel of peace, regarded infidels and heretics of every description as the enc-

mies whom, as God's own soldier, he was called upon to attack and slay wherever he could meet with them, without demanding or waiting for any other cause of quarrel than the difference of religious faith. The duties of morality were indeed formally imposed on him by the oath of his order, as well as that of defending the church, and extirpating heresy and misbelief. But, in all ages, it has been usual for men to compound with their consciences for breaches of the moral code of religion, by a double portion of zeal for its abstract doctrines. In the middle ages, this course might be pursued on system. for the church allowed an exploit done on the infidels as a merit which might obliterate the guilt of the most atrocious crimes.

The genius alike of the age and of the order tended to render the zeal of the professors of chivalry fierce, burning, and intolerant. If an infidel, says a great authority, impugn the doctrines of the Christian faith before a churchman, he should reply to him by argument; but a knight should render no other reason to the infidel than six inches of his falchion thrust into his accursed bowels. Even courtesy, and the respect due to ladies of high degree, gave way when they chanced to be infidels. The renowned Sir Bevis of Hamptoun, being invited by the fair Princess Josiane to come to her bower, replies to the paymims who brought the message,

"I wil ne gon one foot on ground  
For to speke with an heathen hound  
Unchristian houndes, I rede ye flee,  
Or I your heart s bloode will see

This intemperate zeal for religion the knights were expected to maintain at every risk, however imminent. Like the early Christians, they were prohibited from acquiescing, even by silence, in the rites of idolatry, although death should be the consequence of their interrupting them. In the fine romance of *Huon of Bordeaux*, that champion is represented as having failed in duty to God and his faith, because he had professed himself a Saracen for the temporary purpose of obtaining entrance into the palace of the Amial Gaudifer. "And when Sir Huon passed the third gate, he remembered him of the lie he had spoken to obtain entrance into the first. Alas! said the knight, what but destruction can betide one who has so foully falsified and denied his faith towards him who has done so much for me!" His mode of repentance was truly chivalrous. When he came to the gate of the last interior enclosure of the castle, he said to the warder, "Pagan, accused be thou of God, open the gate." When he entered the hall where the pagan monarch was seated in full state, he struck off, without ceremony, the head of the pagan lord who sat next in rank to him, exclaiming at the same time with a loud voice, "God, thou hast given me grace well to commence my emprise; may our Redeemer grant me to bring it to an honourable conclusion!" Many such passages



might be quoted to show the outrageous nature of the zeal which was supposed to actuate a Christian knight. But it is needless to ransack works of fiction for this purpose. The real history of the crusades, founded on the spirit of chivalry, and on the restless and intolerant zeal which was blended by the churchmen with this military establishment, are an authentic and fatal proof of the same facts. The hare-brained and adventurous character of these enterprises, not less than the promised pardons, indulgences, and remissions of the church, rendered them dear to the warriors of the middle ages; the idea of re-establishing the Christian religion in the Holy Land, and wresting the tomb of Christ from the infidels, made kings, princes, and nobles, blind to its hazards; and they rushed, army after army, to Palestine, in the true spirit of chivalry, whose faithful professors felt themselves the rather called upon to undertake an adventure, from the peculiar dangers which surrounded it, and the numbers who had fallen in previous attempts.

It was after the conquest of the Holy Land that the union between temporal and spiritual chivalry (for such was the term sometimes given to monastic establishments) became perfect, by the institution of the two celebrated military orders of monks, the Knights Templars and Knights of St. John of Jerusalem, who, renouncing (at least in terms) the pomp, power, and pleasures of the world, and taking upon themselves the monastic vows of celibacy, purity, and obedience, did not cease to remain soldiers, and directed their whole energy against the Saracens. The history of these orders will be found in its proper place in this work; but their existence is here noticed as illustrating our general proposition concerning the union of devotion and chivalry. A few general remarks will close this part of the subject.

The obvious danger of teaching a military body to consider themselves as missionaries of religion, and bound to spread its doctrines, is, that they are sure to employ in its service their swords and lances. The end is held to sanctify the means, and the slaughter of thousands of infidels is regarded as an indifferent, or rather as a meritorious action, providing it may occasion the conversion of the remnant, or the peopling their land with professors of a purer faith. The wars of Charlemagne in Saxony, the massacres of the Albigenses in the south of France, the long-continued wars of Palestine, all served to illustrate the dangers resulting from the doctrine, which inculcated religion, not as a check upon the horrors and crimes of war, but as itself its most proper and legitimate cause. The evil may be said to have survived the decay of chivalry, to have extended itself to the New World, and to have occasioned those horrors with which it was devastated for ages after its first discovery. The Spanish conquerors of South America were not, indeed, knights-errant, but the nature of their enterprises, as well as the mode in which they were conducted, partook deeply of the

spirit of chivalry. In no country of Europe had this spirit sunk so deeply and spread so wide as in Spain. The extravagant positions respecting the point of honour, and the romantic summons which chivalry proclaimed to deeds of danger and glory, suited the ardent and somewhat Oriental character of the Spaniards, a people more remarkable for force of imagination, and depth of feeling, than for wit or understanding. Chivalry, in Spain, was embittered by a double proportion of intolerant bigotry, owing to their constant and inveterate wars with the Moorish invaders. The strain of sentiment, therefore, which chivalry inspired, continued for a long time to mark the manners of Spain after the decay of its positive institutions, as the beams of the sun tinge the horizon after the setting of its orb. The warriors whom she sent to the New World sought and found marvels which resembled those of romance; they achieved deeds of valour against such odds of numbers as are only recorded in the annals of knight-errantry; and, alas, they followed their prototypes in that indifference for human life, which is the usual companion of intolerant zeal. Avarice, indeed, brought her more sordid shades to complete the gloomy picture; and avarice was unknown to the institutions of chivalry. The intolerant zeal, however, which overthrew the altars of the Indians by violence, instead of assailing their errors by reason, and which imputed to them as crimes their ignorance of a religion which had never been preached to them, and their rejection of speculative doctrines of faith, propounded by persons whose practice was so ill calculated to recommend them—all these may be traced to the spirit of chivalry, and the military devotion of its professors.

The religion of the knights, like that of the times, was debased by superstition. Each champion had his favourite saint, to whom he addressed himself upon special occasions of danger, and to whom, after the influence of his lady's eyes, he was wont to ascribe the honour of his conquest. St. Michael, the leader of banded seraphim, and the personal antagonist of Satan,—St. George, St. James, and St. Martin, all of whom popular faith had invested with the honours of chivalry,—were frequently selected as the appropriate champions of the militant adventurers yet on earth. The knights used their names adjoined to their own, as their insignia, watch-word, or signal for battle. Edward III., fighting valiantly in a night-skirmish before the gates of Calais, was heard to accompany each blow he struck with the invocation of his tutelar saints, Ha! Saint Edward! ha! St. George! But the Virgin Mary, to whom their superstition ascribed the qualities of youth, beauty, and sweetness, which they prized in their terrestrial mistresses, was an especial object of the devotion of the followers of chivalry, as of all other good Catholics. Tournaments were undertaken, and feats of arms performed in her honour, as in that of an earthly mistress; and the veneration with which she was regarded seems occasionally to

have partaken of the character of romantic affection. She was often held to return this love by singular marks of her favour and protection. During an expedition of the Christians to the coast of Africa, Froissart informs us that a large black dog was frequently seen in their camp, which barked furiously whenever the infidels approached it by night, and rendered such services to the Christian adventurers by its vigilance, that with one consent they named it "The Dog of our Lady."

But although, as is incidental to human institutions, the mixture of devotion in the military character of the knight degenerated into brutal intolerance and superstition in its practical effects, nothing could be more beautiful and praiseworthy than the theory on which it was grounded. That the soldier drawing the sword in defence of his country and its liberties, or of the oppressed innocence of damsels, widows, and orphans, or in support of religious rights, for which those to whom they belonged were disqualified by their profession to combat in person, — that he should blend with all the feelings which these offices inspired, a deep sense of devotion, exalting him above the advantage and even the fame which he himself might derive from victory, and giving dignity to defeat itself, as a lesson of divine chastisement and humiliation ; that the knight on whose valour his countrymen were to rely in danger should set them an example in observing the duties and precepts of religion,—are circumstances so well qualified to soften, to dignify, and to grace the profession of arms, that we cannot but regret their tendency to degenerate into a ferocious propensity to bigotry, persecution, and intolerance. Such, however, is the tendency of all human institutions, which, however fairly framed in theory, are in practice corrupted by our evil passions, until the results which flow from them become the very reverse of what was to have been expected and desired.

The next ingredient in the spirit of chivalry, second in force only to the religious zeal of its professors, and frequently predominating over it, was a devotion to the female sex, and particularly to her whom each knight selected as the chief object of his affection, of a nature so extravagant and unbounded as to approach to a sort of idolatry.

The original source of this sentiment is to be found, like that of chivalry itself, in the customs and habits of the northern tribes, who possessed, even in their rudest state, so many honourable and manly distinctions, over all the other nations in the same stage of society. The chaste and temperate habits of these youth, and the opinion that it was dishonourable to hold sexual intercourse until the twentieth year was attained, was in the highest degree favourable not only to the morals and health of the ancient Germans, but must have contributed greatly to place their females in that dignified and respectable rank which they held in society. Nothing tends so much to blunt the feelings, to harden the heart, and to destroy the imagination, as the wor-

ship of the VAGA VENUS in early youth. Wherever women have been considered as the early, willing, and accommodating slaves of the voluptuousness of the other sex, their character has become degraded, and they have sunk into domestic drudges and bondswomen among the poor,—the slaves of a harem among the more wealthy. On the other hand, the men, easily and early sated with indulgencies, which soon lose their poignancy when the senses only are interested, become first indifferent, then harsh and brutal, to the unfortunate slaves of their pleasures. The sated lover,—and perhaps it is the most brutal part of humanity,—is soon converted into the capricious tyrant, like the successful seducer of the modern poet.

“ Hard ; with their fears and terrors to behold  
The cause of all, the faithless lover cold,  
Impatient grown at every wish denied,  
And barely civil, soothed and gratified ”

CRABBE'S *Borough*, p. 213.

Habitual indulgence seeks change of objects to relieve satiety. Hence polygamy, and all its brutalizing consequences, which were happily unknown to our Gothic ancestors. The virtuous and manly restraints imposed on their youth were highly calculated to exalt the character of both sexes, and especially to raise the females in their own eyes and those of their lovers. They were led to regard themselves, not as the passive slaves of pleasure, but as the objects of a prolonged and respectful affection, which could only be finally gratified when their lovers had attained the age of mature reason, and as capable to govern and to defend the family which should arise around them. With the young man imagination and sentiment combined to heighten his ideas of a pleasure which nature instructed him to seek, and which the wise laws of his country prevented him from prematurely aspiring to share. To a youth so situated, the maiden on whom he placed his affections became an object of awe as well as of affection ; the passion which he indulged for her was of a nature as timid and pure as engrossing and powerful ; the minds of the parties became united before the joining of their hands, and a moral union preceded the mere intercourse of the sexes.

The marriages formed under these wise auspices were, in general, happy and affectionate.—Adultery was unfrequent, and punished with the utmost rigour ; nor could she who had undergone the penalty of such a crime find a second husband, however distinguished by beauty, birth, or wealth.\* The awe and devotion with which the lover had regarded his destined bride during the years in which the German youth were enjoined celibacy, became regard and affection in the husband towards the sharer of his labours and the mistress of his household. The

\* *Tacit. Germania.*

matron maintained that rank in society which love had assigned to the maiden. No one then, says the Roman historian, dared to ridicule the sacred union of marriage, or to term an infringement of its laws a compliance with the manners of the age. The German wife, once married, seldom endeavoured to form a second union, but continued, in honoured widowhood, to direct and manage the family of her deceased husband. This habitual subjection of sensuality to sentiment, these plain, simple, virtuous, and temperate manners of the German females, placed the females in that high rank of society, which the sex occupies when its conduct is estimable, and from which it as certainly declines in ages or climates prone to luxurious indulgence. The superintendence of the domestic affairs was assigned to the German women, a duty in which the men seldom interfered, unless when rendered by age or wounds incapable of warfare. They were capable of exercising the supreme authority in their tribe, and of holding the honours of the priesthood. But the influence of the women in a German tribe, as well as their duties in war, will be best understood from the words of Tacitus.

“It is the principal incitement to the courage of the Germans, that in battle their separate troops or columns are not arranged promiscuously as chance directs, but consists each of a united family, or clan, with its relatives. Their dearest pledges are placed in the vicinity whence may be heard the cries of their females, the wailings of their infants, whom each accounts the most sacred witnesses and the dearest eulogists of his valour. The wounded repair to their mothers and spouses, who hesitate not to number their wounds, and to suck the blood that flows from them. The females carry refreshment to those engaged in the contest, and encourage them by their exhortations. It is related, that armies, when disordered, and about to give way, have renewed the contest, at the instance of the women; moved by the earnestness of their entreaties, their exposed bosoms, and the danger of approaching captivity :—a doom which they dread more on account of their females than even on their own ;—insomuch that these German states are most effectually bound to obedience, among the number of whose hostages there are noble damsels as well as men. They deem, indeed, that there resides in the female sex something sacred and capable of presaging the future ; nor do they scorn their advice or neglect their responses. In the time of Vespasian we have seen Velleda long hold the rank of a deity in most of the German states ; and, in former times, the venerated Aurinia and other females ; not, however, from mere flattery, nor yet in the character of actual goddesses.”

The tales and *Sagas* of the north, in which females often act the most distinguished part, might also be quoted as proofs of the rank which they held in society. We find them separating the most desperate frays by their presence, their commands, or their mantles, which

they threw over the levelled weapons of the combatants. Nor were their rights less extensive than their authority. In the *Eyrbyggja Saga* we are informed, that Thordisa, the mother of the celebrated Pontiff Snorro, and wife of Biarko of Helgafels, received a blow from her husband. The provocation was strong, for the matron had, in her husband's house and at his table, attempted to stab his guest Eyulf Graie, on account of his having slain one of her relations. Yet so little did this provocation justify the offence, that in the presence of the comitia, or public assembly of the tribe, Thordisa invoked witnesses to bear testimony, that she divorced her husband on account of his having raised his hand against her person. And such were the rights of a northern *mater familias*, that the divorce and a division of goods immediately took place between the husband and wife, although the violence of which Thordisa complained was occasioned by her own attempt to murder a guest.

We have traced the ideas of the Gothic tribes on this important point the more at length, because they show, that the character of veneration, sanctity, and inviolability, attached to the female character, together with the important part assigned to them in society, were brought with them from their native forests, and had existence long before the chivalrous institutions in which they made so remarkable a feature. They easily became amalgamated in a system so well fitted to adopt whatever was romantic and enthusiastic in manners or sentiment. Amid the various duties of knighthood, that of protecting the female sex, respecting their persons, and redressing their wrongs, becoming the champion of their cause, and the chastiser of those by whom they were injured, was presented as one of the principal objects of the institution. Their oath bound the new-made knights to defend the cause of all women without exception; and the most pressing way of conjuring them to grant a boon was to implore it in the name of God and the ladies. The cause of a distressed lady was, in many instances, preferable to that even of the country to which the knight belonged. Thus, the Captal de Buche, though an English subject, did not hesitate to unite his troops with those of the Comte de Foix, to relieve the ladies in a French town, where they were besieged and threatened with violence by the insurgent peasantry. The looks, the words, the sign of a lady, were accounted to make knights at time of need perform double their usual deeds of strength and valour. At tournaments and in combats, the voices of the ladies were heard like those of the German females in former battles, calling on the knights to remember their fame, and exert themselves to the uttermost. "Think, gentle knights," was their cry, "upon the wool of your breasts, the nerve of your arms, the love you cherish in your hearts, and do valiantly, for ladies behold you." The corresponding shouts of the combatants were, "Love of ladies! Death of warriors! On, valiant knights, for you fight under fair eyes."

Where the love or honour of a lady was at stake, the fairest prize was held out to the victorious knight, and champions from every quarter were sure to hasten to combat in a cause so popular. Chaucer, when he describes the assembly of the knights who came with Arcite and Palemon to fight for the love of the fair Emilie, describes the manners of his age in the following lines :—

“ For every knight that loved chivalry,  
And would his thanks have a passant name,  
Hath pray'd that he might ben of that game,  
And well was him that thereto chusen was.  
For if there fell to-morrow such a case,  
Ye knowen well that every lusty knight  
That loveth par amour, and hath his might,  
Were it in Engellonde, or elleswhere,  
They wold hir thanks willen to be there.  
To fight for a lady ! Ah ! Benedicite,  
It were a lusty sight for to see.”

It is needless to multiply quotations on a subject so trite and well known. The defence of the female sex in general, the regard due to their honour, the subservience paid to their commands, the reverent awe and courtesy, which, in their presence, forbear all unseemly words and actions, were so blended with the institution of chivalry, as to form its very essence.

But it was not enough that the “very perfect, gentle knight,” should reverence the fair sex in general. It was essential to his character that he should select, as his proper choice, “a lady and a love,” to be the polar star of his thoughts, the mistress of his affections, and the directress of his actions. In her service, he was to observe the duties of loyalty, faith, secrecy, and reverence. Without such an empress of his heart, a knight, in the phrase of the times, was a ship without a rudder, a horse without a bridle, a sword without a hilt ; a being, in short, devoid of that ruling guidance and intelligence, which ought to inspire his bravery, and direct his actions.

The Dame des Belles Cousines, having cast her eyes upon the little Jean de Saintré, then a page of honour at court, demanded of him the name of his mistress and his love, on whom his affections were fixed. The poor boy, thus pressed, replied, that the first object of his love was the lady his mother, and the next his sister Jacqueline. “Jouvencel,” replied the inquisitive lady, who had her own reasons for not being contented with this simple answer, “we do not now talk of the affection due to your mother and sister ; I desire to know the name of the lady whom you love *par amours*.”—“In faith, madam,” said the poor page, to whom the mysteries of chivalry, as well as love, were yet unknown, “I love no one *par amours*.”

“Ah, false gentleman, and traitor to the laws of chivalry,” returned the lady, “dare you say that you love no lady ? well may we perceive your falsehood and craven spirit by such an avowal. Whence were

derived the great valour and the high achievements of Lancelot, of Gawain, of Tristrem, of Giron the Courteous, and of other heroes of the Round Table,—whence those of Panthus, and of so many other valiant knights and squires of this realm, whose names I could enumerate had I time,—whence the exaltation of many whom I myself have known to arise to high dignity and renown, except from their animating desire to maintain themselves in the grace and favour of their ladies, without which mainspring to exertion and valour, they must have remained unknown and insignificant? And do you, coward page, now dare to aver, that you have no lady, and desire to have none? Hence! false heart that thou art.”

To avoid these bitter reproaches, the simple page named as his lady and love, *par amours*, Matheline de Coucy, a child of ten years old. The answer of the Dame des Belles Cousines, after she had indulged in the mirth which his answer prompted, instructed him how to place his affections more advantageously; and as the former part of the quotation may show the reader how essential it was to the profession of chivalry that every one of its professors should elect a lady of his affections, that which follows explains the principles on which his choice should be regulated.

“Matheline,” said the lady, “is indeed a pretty girl, and of high rank, and better lineage than appertains to you. But what good, what profit, what honour, what advantage, what comfort, what aid, what council for advancing you in the ranks of chivalry, can you derive from such a choice? Sir, you ought to choose a lady of high and noble blood, who has the talent and means to counsel and aid you at your need, and her you ought to serve so truly, and love so loyally, that she must be compelled to acknowledge the true and honourable affection which you bear to her. For believe there is no lady, however cruel and haughty, but through length of faithful service will be brought to acknowledge and reward loyal affection with some portion of pity, compassion, or mercy. In this manner, you will attain the praise of a worthy knight; and, till you follow such a course, I will not give an apple for you or your achievements.”

The lady then proceeds to lecture the acolyte of chivalry at considerable length on the seven mortal sins, and the way in which the true amorous knight may eschew commission of them. Still, however, the saving grace inculcated in her sermon was fidelity and secrecy in the service of the mistress whom he should love *par amours*. She proves, by the aid of quotations from the Scripture, the fathers of the church, and the ancient philosophers, that the true and faithful lover can never fall into the crimes of Pride, Anger, Envy, Sloth, or Gluttony. From each of these his true faith is held to warrant and defend him. Nay, so pure was the nature of the flame which she recommended, that she maintained it to be inconsistent even with the



seventh sin of Chambering and Wantonness, to which it might seem too nearly allied. The least dishonest thought or action was, according to her doctrine, sufficient to forfeit the chivalrous lover the favour of his lady. It seems, however, that the greater part of her charge concerning incontinence is levelled against such as haunted the receptacles of open vice; and that she reserved an exception (of which, in the course of the history, she made liberal use) in favour of the intercourse which, in all love, honour, and secrecy, might take place, when the favoured and faithful knight had obtained, by long service, the boon of amorous mercy from the lady whom he loved *par amours*. The last encouragement which the Dame des Belles Cousines held out to Saintré, in order to excite his ambition, and induce him to fix his passion upon a lady of elevated birth, rank, and sentiment, is also worthy of being quoted, since it shows that it was the prerogative of chivalry to abrogate the distinctions of rank, and elevate the hopes of the knight, whose sole patrimony was his arms and valour, to the high-born and princely dame, before whom he carved as a sewer.

"How is it possible for me," replied poor Saintré, after having heard out the unmercifully long lecture of the Dame des Belles Cousines, "to find a lady, such as you describe, who will accept of my service, and requite the affection of such a one as I am?"—"And why should you not find her?" answered the lady preceptress. "Are you not gently born? Are you not a fair and proper youth? Have you not eyes to look on her—ears to hear her—a tongue to plead your cause to her—hands to serve her—feet to move at her bidding—body and heart to accomplish loyally her commands? And having all these, can you doubt to adventure yourself in the service of any lady whatsoever?"

In these extracts is painted the actual manners of the age of chivalry. The necessity of a perfect knight having a mistress, whom he loved *par amours*, the duty of dedicating his time to obey her commands, however capricious, and his strength to execute extravagant feats of valour, which might redound to her praise,—for all that was done for her sake, and under her auspices, was counted her merit, as the victories of their generals were ascribed to the Roman Emperors,—was not a whit less necessary to complete the character of a good knight than the Dame des Belles Cousines represented it.

It was the especial pride of each distinguished champion, to maintain, against all others, the superior worth, beauty, and accomplishments of his lady; to bear her picture from court to court, and support, with lance and sword, her superiority to all other dames, abroad or at home. To break a spear for the love of their ladies, was a challenge courteously given, and gently accepted, among all true followers of chivalry; and history and romance are alike filled with

the tilts and tournaments which took place upon this argument, which was ever ready and ever acceptable. Indeed, whatever the subject of the tournament had been, the lists were never closed until a solemn course had been made in honour of the ladies.

There were knights yet more adventurous, who sought to distinguish themselves by singular and uncommon feats of arms in honour of their mistresses; and such was usually the cause of the whimsical and extravagant vows of arms which we have subsequently to notice. To combat against extravagant odds, to fight amid the press of armed knights without some essential part of their armour, to do some deed of audacious valour in face of friend and foe, were the services by which the knights strove to recommend themselves, or which their mistresses (very justly so called) imposed on them as proofs of their affection.

On such occasions, the favoured knight, as he wore the colours and badge of the lady of his affections, usually exerted his ingenuity in inventing some device or cognisance which might express their affection, either openly as boasting of it in the eye of the world, or in such mysterious mode of indication as should only be understood by the beloved person, if circumstances did not permit an avowal of his passion. Among the earliest instances of the use of the English language at the court of the Norman monarch, is the distich painted in the shield of Edward III. under the figure of a white swan, being the device which that warlike monarch wore at a tourney at Windsor.

‘ Ha! Ha! the white swan,  
By God his soul, I am thy man ”

The choice of these devices was a very serious matter; and the usurpation of such as any knight had previously used and adopted, was often the foundation of a regular quarrel, of which many instances occur in Froissart and other writers.

The ladies, bound as they were in honour to requite the passion of their knights, were wont, on such occasions, to dignify them by the present of a scarf, ribbon, or glove, which was to be worn in the press of battle and tournament. These marks of favour they displayed on their helmets, and they were accounted the best incentives to deeds of valour. The custom appears to have prevailed in France to a late period, though polluted with the grossness so often mixed with the affected refinement and gallantry of that nation. In the attack made by the Duke of Buckingham upon the Isle of Rhé, favours were found on the persons of many of the French soldiers who fell at the skirmish on the landing; but for the manner in which they were disposed, we are compelled to refer to Howel and Wilson.

Sometimes the ladies, in conferring these tokens of their favour, clogged them with the most extravagant and severe conditions. But the lover had this advantage in such cases, that if he ventured to

encounter the hazard imposed, and chanced to survive it, he had, according to the fashion of the age, the right of exacting, from the lady, favours corresponding in importance. The annals of Chivalry abound with stories of cruel and cold fair ones, who subjected their lovers to extremes of danger, in hopes that they might get rid of their addresses, but were, upon their unexpected success, caught in their own snare, and, as ladies who would not have their name made the theme of reproach by every minstrel, compelled to recompense the deeds which their champion had achieved in their name. There are instances in which the lover used his right of reprisals with some rigour, as in the well-known *fabliau* of the three knights and the shift; in which a lady proposes to her three lovers, successively, the task of entering, unarmed, into the *mêlée* of a tournament, arrayed only in one of her shifts. The perilous proposal is declined by two of the knights and accepted by the third, who thrusts himself in the unprotected state required, into all the hazards of the tournament, sustains many wounds, and carries off the prize of the day. On the next day the husband of the lady (for she was married) was to give a superb banquet to the knights and nobles who had attended the tourney. The wounded victor sends the shift back to its owner, with his request that she would wear it over her rich dress on this solemn occasion, soiled and torn as it was, and stained all over with the blood of its late wearer. The lady did not hesitate to comply, declaring, that she regarded this shift, stained with the blood of her "fair friend, as more precious than if it were of the most costly materials." Jaques de Basin, the minstrel, who relates this curious tale, is at a loss to say whether the palm of true love should be given to the knight or to the lady on this remarkable occasion. The husband, he assures us, had the good sense to seem to perceive nothing uncommon in the singular vestment with which his lady was attired, and the rest of the good company highly admired her courageous requital of the knight's gallantry.

Sometimes the patience of the lover was worn out by the cold-hearted vanity which thrust him on such perilous enterprises. At the court of one of the German emperors, while some ladies and gallants of the court were looking into a den where two lions were confined, one of them purposely let her glove fall within the palisade which enclosed the animals, and commanded her lover, as a true knight, to fetch it out to her. He did not hesitate to obey, jumped over the enclosure; threw his mantle to the animals as they sprung at him; snatched up the glove, and regained the outside of the palisade. But when in safety, he proclaimed aloud, that what he had achieved was done for the sake of his own reputation, and not for that of a false lady, who could, for her sport and cold-blooded vanity, force a brave man on a duel so desperate. And, with the applause of all that were present, he renounced her love for ever.

This, however, was an uncommon circumstance. In general, the lady was supposed to have her lover's character as much at heart as her own, and to mean by pushing him upon enterprises of hazard, only to give him an opportunity of meriting her good graces, which she could not with honour confer upon one undistinguished by deeds of chivalry. An affecting instance is given by Godscroft.

At the time when the Scotch were struggling to recover from the usurpation of Edward I., the castle of Douglas was repeatedly garrisoned by the English, and these garrisons were as frequently surprised, and cut to pieces, by the good Lord James of Douglas, who, lying in the mountainous wilds of Cairntable, and favoured by the intelligence which he maintained among his vassals, took opportunity of the slightest relaxation of vigilance to surprise the fortress. At length, a fair dame of England announced to the numerous suitors who sought her hand, that she would confer it on the man who should keep the perilous castle of Douglas (so it was called) for a year and a day. The knight who undertook this dangerous task at her request, discharged his duty like a careful soldier for several months, and the lady, relenting at the prospect of his continued absence, sent a letter to recall him, declaring she held his probation as accomplished. In the meantime, however, he had received a defiance from Douglas, threatening, that let him use his utmost vigilance, he would recover from him his father's castle before Palm-Sunday. The English knight deemed that he could not in honour leave the castle till this day was past; and on the very eve of Palm-Sunday was surprised and slain with his lady's letter in his pocket, the perusal whereof greatly grieved the good Lord James of Douglas.

We are left much to our own conjectures on the appearance and manners of these haughty beauties, who were wooed with sword and lance, whose favours were bought at the expense of such dear and desperate perils, and who were worshipped, like heathen deities, with human sacrifices. The character of the ladies of the ages of chivalry was probably determined by that of the men, to whom it sometimes approached. Most of these heroines were educated to understand the treatment of wounds, not only of the heart, but of the sword; and in romance, at least, the quality of leech-craft (practised by the Lady Bountifuls of the last generation) was essential to the character of an accomplished princess. They sometimes trespassed on the province of their lovers, and actually took up arms. The Countess de Montfort in Bretagne is celebrated by Froissart for the gallantry with which she defended her castle, when besieged by the English; and the old Prior of Lochleven, in Scotland, is equally diffuse in the praise of Black Agnes, Countess of March, who, in the reign of Edward III., held out the castle of Dunbar against the English. She appeared on the battlements with a white handkerchief in her hands, and wiped the

walls in derision where they had been struck by stones from the English engines. When Montagu, Earl of Salisbury, brought up to the walls a military engine, like the Roman *testudo*, called a sow, she exclaimed in rhyme,

‘Beware, Montagou,  
For farrow shall thy sow”

A huge rock discharged from the battlements, dashed the sow to pieces, and the English soldiers who escaped from its ruins were called by the Countess in derision, Montagu’s pigs.

The nature of the conferences between these high-minded heroines and their lovers was somewhat peculiar. Their delectations were in tales of warlike exploits, and in discoursing of hunting and hawking. But when these topics were exhausted, they found in metaphysical discussions of nice questions concerning the passion of love, an endless source of interesting disquisition. The idea and definition of a true and pure passion, illustrated by an hundred imaginary cases devised on purpose, were managed in the same manner in which the schoolmen of the day agitated their points of metaphysical theology. The Scotists and the Thomists, whose useless and nonsensical debates cumbered the world with so many volumes of absurd disquisition upon the most extravagant points of polemical divinity, saw their theological labours rivalled in the courts of love, where the most abstracted reasoning was employed in discussing subtle questions upon the exaggerated hopes, fears, doubts, and suspicions of lovers, the circumstances of whose supposed cases were often ridiculous, sometimes criminal, sometimes licentious, and almost always puerile and extravagant. In the meanwhile it is sufficient to state, that the discussions in the courts of love regarded such important and interesting questions, as, Whether his love be most meritorious who has formed his passion entirely on hearing, or his who has actually seen his mistress? with others of a tendency equally edifying.

Extremes of every kind border on each other; and as the devotion of the knights of chivalry degenerated into superstition, the Platonic refinements and subtleties of amorous passion which they professed, were sometimes compatible with very coarse and gross debauchery. We have seen that they derived from the Gothic tribes that high and reverential devotion to the female sex, which forms the strongest tint in the manners of chivalry. But with the simplicity of these ancient times they lost their innocence; and woman, though still worshipped with enthusiasm as in the German forests, did not continue to be (in all cases at least) the same pure object of regard. The marriage-tie ceased to be respected; and, as the youthful knights had seldom the means or inclination to encumber themselves with wives and families, their lady-love was often chosen among the married ladies of the court. It is true, that such a connexion was supposed to be consistent

with all respect and honour, and was regarded by the world, and sometimes by the husband, as a high strain of Platonic sentiment, through which the character of its object in no respect suffered. But nature vindicated herself for the violence offered to her; and while the metaphysical students and pleaders in the courts of love professed to aspire but to the lip or hand of their ladies, and to make a merit of renouncing all farther intrusion on their bounties, they privately indulged themselves in loves which had very little either of delicacy or sentiment. In the romance of the *Petit Jehan de Saintré*, that self-same Lady des Belles Cousines, who lectures so learnedly upon the seven mortal sins, not only confers on her deserving lover "le don d'amoureux merci," but enters into a very unworthy and disgraceful intrigue with a stout broad-shouldered abbot, into which no sentiment whatever can be supposed to enter. The romance of *Tirante the White*, praised by Cervantes as a faithful picture of the knights and ladies of his age, seems to have been written in an actual brothel, and, contrasted with others, may lead us to suspect that their purity is that of romance, its profligacy that of reality. This license was greatly increased by the Crusades, from which the survivors of these wild expeditions brought back the corrupted morals of the East, to avenge the injuries they had inflicted on its inhabitants. Joinville has informed us of the complaints which Saint Louis made to him in confidence of the debaucheries practised in his own royal tent, by his attendants, in this holy expedition. And the ignominious punishment to which he subjected a knight, detected in such excesses, shows what severe remedies he judged necessary to stem the increase of libertinism.

Indeed, the gross license which was practised during the middle ages, may be well estimated by the vulgar and obscene language that was currently used in tales and fictions addressed to the young and noble of both sexes. In the romance of the *Round Table*, as Ascham sternly states, little was to be learned but examples of homicide and adultery, although he had himself seen it admitted to the antechamber of princes, when it was held a crime to be possessed of the Word of God. In the Romance of *Amadis de Gaul*, and many others, the heroines, without censure or imputation, confer on their lovers the rights of a husband before the ceremony of the church gave them a title to the name. These are serious narrations, in which decorum, at least, is rarely violated. But the comic tales are of a grosser cast.

The *Canterbury Tales* of Chaucer contain many narratives, of which, not only the diction, but the whole turn of the narrative, is extremely gross. Yet it does not seem to have occurred to the author, a man of rank and fashion, that they were improper to be recited, either in the presence of the prioress or her votaries, or in that of the noble knight who

—of his port was meek as is a maid,  
And never yet no villanv he said.

And he makes but a light apology for including the disasters of the *Millar of Trompington*, or of *Absalom the Gentle Clerk*, in the same series of narrations with the *Knight's Tale*. Many of Bandello's most profligate novels are expressly dedicated to females of rank and consideration. And, to conclude, the *Fabliaux*, published by Barbazan and Le Grand, are frequently as revolting, from their naked grossness, as interesting from the lively pictures which they present of life and manners. Yet these were the chosen literary pastimes of the fair and the gay, during the times of chivalry, listened to, we cannot but suppose, with an interest considerably superior to that exhibited by the yawning audience who heard the theses of the courts of love attacked and supported in logical form, and with metaphysical subtlety.

Should the manners of the times appear inconsistent in these respects which we have noticed, we must remember that we are ourselves variable and inconsistent animals, and that, perhaps, the surest mode of introducing and encouraging any particular vice, is to rank the corresponding virtue at a pitch unnatural in itself, and beyond the ordinary attainment of humanity. The vows of celibacy introduced profligacy among the Catholic clergy, as the high-flown and overstrained Platonism of the professors of chivalry favoured the increase of license and debauchery.

After the love of God and of his lady, the Preux Chevalier was to be guided by that of glory and renown. He was bound by his vow to seek out adventures of risk and peril, and never to abstain from the quest which he might undertake, for any unexpected odds of opposition which he might encounter. It was not indeed the sober and regulated exercise of valour, but its fanaticism, which the genius of chivalry demanded of its followers. Enterprises the most extravagant in conception, the most difficult in execution, the most useless when achieved, were those by which an adventurous knight chose to distinguish himself. There were solemn occasions also, on which these displays of chivalrous enthusiasm were specially expected and called for. It is only sufficient to name the tournaments, single combats, and solemn banquets, at which vows of chivalry were usually formed and proclaimed.

The tournaments were uniformly performed and frequented by the choicest and noblest youth in Europe, until the fatal accident of Henry II., after which they fell gradually into disuse. It was in vain that, from the various accidents to which they gave rise, these dangerous amusements were prohibited by the heads of the Christian church. The Popes, infallible as they were deemed, might direct, but could not curb, the military spirit of chivalry; they could excite crusades, but they could not abolish tournaments. Their laws, customs, and regulations, will fall properly under a separate article. It is here sufficient to observe that these military games were of two kinds. In the most ancient, mean-

ing "nothing in hate, but all in honour," the adventurous knights fought with sharp swords and lances, as in the day of battle. Even then, however, the number of blows was usually regulated, or, in case of a general combat, some rules were laid down to prevent too much slaughter. The regulations of Duke Theseus for the tournament in Athens, as narrated by Chaucer in the *Knight's Tale*, may give a good example of these restrictions. When the combatants fought on foot, it was prohibited to strike otherwise than at the head or body; the number of strokes to be dealt with the sword and battle-axe were carefully numbered and limited, as well as the careers to be run with the lance. In these circumstances alone, the combats at *outrance*, as they were called, differed from encounters in actual war.

In process of time, the dangers of the solemn justs held under the authority of princes, were modified by the introduction of arms of courtesy, as they were termed; lances, namely, without heads, and with round braces of wood at the extremity called *rockets*, and swords without points, and with blunted edges. But the risk continued great, from bruises, falls, and the closeness of the defensive armour of the times, in which the wearers were often smothered. The weapons at *outrance* were afterwards chiefly used when knights of different and hostile countries engaged by appointment, or when some adventurous gallants took upon them the execution of an enterprise of arms (*pas d'armes*), in which they, as challengers, undertook, for a certain time, and under certain conditions, to support the honour of their country, or their mistress, against all comers. These enterprises often ended fatally, but the knights who undertook them were received in the foreign countries which they visited in accomplishment of their challenge, with the highest deference and honour: their arrival was considered as affording a subject of sport and jubilee to all ranks; and when any mischance befell them, such as that of De Lindsay, who, in a tournament at Berwick, had his helmet nailed to his skull, by the truncheon of a lance which penetrated both, and died, after devoutly confessing himself, in the casque from which they could not disengage him, the knights who were spectators prayed that God would vouchsafe them in his mercy a death so fair and so honourable. Stories of such challenges, with the minute details of the events of the combat, form frequent features in the histories of the age.

The contests of the tournament and the PAS D'ARMES were undertaken merely in sport, and for thirst of honour. But the laws of the period afforded the adventurous knight other and more serious combats, in which he might exercise his valour. The custom of trying all doubtful cases by the body of a man, or, as it was otherwise expressed, by the judgment of God—in plain words, by referring the decision to the issue of a duel, prevailed universally among the Gothic tribes, from the highest antiquity. A *salvo* was devised, for the obvious absurdity



of calling upon the weak to encounter the strong, a churchman to oppose a soldier, or age to meet in the lists with activity and youth. It was held that either party might appear personally, or by his champion. This sage regulation gave exercise for the valour of the knights, who were bound by their oaths to maintain the cause of those who had no other protector. And, indeed, there is good reason to think, that the inconveniences and injustice of a law so absurd in itself as that of judicial combat, were evaded and mitigated by the institutions of chivalry, since among the number of knights who were eagerly hunting after opportunities of military distinction, a party incapable of supporting his own cause by combat could have little difficulty in finding a formidable substitute; so that no one, however bold and confident, could prosecute an unjust cause to the uttermost, without the risk of encountering some champion of the innocent party, from among the number of hardy knights who traversed every country seeking ostensible cause of battle.

Besides these formal combats, it was usual for the adventurous knight to display his courage by stationing himself at some pass in a forest, on a bridge, or elsewhere, compelling all passengers to avouch the superiority of his own valour, and the beauty of his mistress, or otherwise to engage with him in single combat. When Alexius Comnenus received the homage of the crusaders, seated upon his throne, previous to their crossing the Hellespont, during the first crusade, a French baron seated himself by the side of the Emperor of the East. He was reproved by Baldwin, and answered in his native language, "What ill-taught clown is this, who dares to keep his seat when the flower of the European nobility are standing around him!" The Emperor, dissembling his indignation, desired to know the birth and condition of the audacious Frank. "I am," replied the baron, "of the noblest race of France. For the rest, I only know that there is near my castle a spot where four roads meet, and near it a church where men, desirous of single combat, spend their time in prayer till some one shall accept their challenge. Often have I frequented that chapel, but never met I one who durst accept my defiance." Thus the Bridge of Rodomont, in the *Orlando Furioso*, and the valiant defiance which the Knight of La Mancha hurled against the merchants of Toledo, who were bound to the fairs of Murcia, were neither fictions of Ariosto nor Cervantes, but had their prototypes in real story. The chivalrous custom of defying all and sundry to mortal combat, subsisted in the Borders under the days of Queen Elizabeth, when the worthy Bernard Gilpin found in his church of Houghton le Spring a glove hung over the altar, which he was informed indicated a challenge to all who should take it down. The remnants of the judicial combats, and the enterprises of arms, may be found in the duels of the present day. In former times they still more resembled each other; for, in the seven-

teenth century, not only the seconds on each side regularly engaged, but it was usual to have more seconds, even to the number of five or six ; a custom pleasantly ridiculed by Lord Chesterfield, in one of the papers of *The World*. It is obvious that a usage, at once so ridiculous, and so detrimental to the peace and happiness of society, must give way, in proportion to the progress of common sense. The custom is in general upon the wane, even as far as respects single combat between men who have actually given or taken offence at each other. The general rules of good-breeding prevent causes of such disagreement from arising in the intercourse of society, and the forward duellist, who is solicitous in seeking them out, is generally accounted a vulgar and ferocious, as well as a dangerous character. At the same time, the habits derived from the days of chivalry still retain a striking effect on our manners, and have fully established a graceful as well as useful punctilio, which tends on the whole to the improvement of society. Every man enters the world under the impression, that neither his strength, his wealth, his station, or his wit, will excuse him from answering, at the risk of his life, any unbecoming encroachment on the civility due to the weakest, the poorest, the least important, or the most modest member of the society in which he mingles. All, too, in the rank and station of gentlemen, are forcibly called upon to remember, that they must resent the imputation of a voluntary falsehood as the most gross injury ; and that the rights of the weaker sex demand protection from every one who would hold a good character in society. In short, from the wild and overstrained courtesies of chivalry has been derived our present system of manners. It is not certainly faultless, and it is guarded by penalties which we must often regret as disproportionably severe. Yet it has a grace and dignity unknown to classic times, when women were slaves, and men coarse and vulgar, or overbearing and brutal, as suited their own humour, without respect to that of the rest of their society.

II. Such being the tone and spirit of chivalry, derived from love, devotion, and valour,—we have next to notice the special forms and laws of the order, which will be found to correspond in every respect to the spirit which they were designed to foster.

The education of the future knight began at an early period. The care of the mother, after the first years of early youth were past, was deemed too tender, and the indulgences of the paternal roof too effeminate, for the future aspirant to the honours of chivalry. “Do you not bless God,” said the Lady Mabel to her husband, the noble Duke Guerin of Montglaive, as on a solemn feast they looked on their four hopeful sons, “do you not bless God that has given you such a promising issue?”—“Dame,” replied Guerin, in the true spirit of the age, “so help me God and Saint Martin ! nothing can do me greater despite than to look on these four great lurdanes, who, arrived at such

an age, yet do nothing but eat the fat, and drink the sweet, and spend their time in idle amusement." To counteract these habits of indulgence, the first step to the order of knighthood was the degree of PAGE.

The young and noble stripling, generally about his twelfth year, was transferred from his father's house to that of some baron or gallant knight, sedulously chosen by the anxious parent as that which had the best reputation for good order and discipline. The children of the first nobles and high crown-vassals were educated by the royal court. And, however the reins of discipline might be in particular cases relaxed, or become corrupted in latter days, the theory was uniformly excellent. The youth who was to learn modesty, obedience, and address in arms and horsemanship, was daily exercised in the use of his weapons, beginning with such as were suited to his strength. He was instructed how to manage a horse with grace and dexterity; how to use the bow and the sword; how to manage the lance, an art which was taught by making him ride a career against a wooden figure holding a buckler called a quintaine. This quintaine turned on an axis; and as there was a wooden sword in the other hand of the supposed opponent, the young cavalier, if he did not manage his horse and weapon with address, was liable to receive a blow when the shock of his charge made the quintaine spin round.

Besides these exercises, the noble youth was required to do the work which, in some respects, belonged to a menial; but not as a menial. He attended his lord during the chase, the rules of which, as an image of war, and as held the principal occupation of a gentleman during peace, were carefully inculcated. He was taught the principal blasts or notes of *venerie*, to be sounded when the hounds were uncoupled, when the prey was on foot, when he was brought to bay, and when he fell. This art did not tend solely to amusement. "The gentle damo-sel," to use the language of the times, learned to bear the fatigue, the hunger, and thirst, which huntsmen are exposed to. By the necessity of encountering and despatching a stag, a boar, or a wolf, at bay, he learned promptitude and courage in the use of his weapons. The accuracy with which he was required to mark the tracks of the hunted animal's course gave him habits of attention and reflection. In the days and nights spent in the chase, amid wide and pathless forests, he acquired the art, so necessary to a soldier, of remarking and studying the face of the country. When benighted, he was taught to steer his course by the stars, if they were visible; if not, to make his couch with patience on the withered leaves, or in a tree. Had he lost his way by daytime, he distinguished the points of the compass by remarking which side of the trees were most covered with moss, and from which they threw their branches most freely, circumstances which, compared with the known course of the prevailing wind, afforded him the necessary information.

The ceremonial of the chase was to be acquired, as well as its arts. To BRITTLE or BREAK the deer (in French, *faire la curée*,) in plain terms, to stay and disembowel the stag, a matter in which much precision was required, and the rules of which were ascribed to the celebrated Sir Tristrem of Lionesse, was an indispensable requisite of the page's education. Nor did his concern with the venison end here; he placed it on the table, waited during the banquet, and carved the ponderous dishes, when required or permitted to do so. Much grace and delicacy, it was supposed, might be displayed on these occasions; and, in one romance, we read of the high birth and breeding of a page being ascertained, by his scrupulously declining to use a towel to wipe his hands, when washed before he began to carve, and contented himself with waving them in the air till they dried of themselves. It is, perhaps, difficult to estimate the force of this delicacy, unless by supposing that he had not a towel or napkin appropriated to his own separate use.

Amidst these various instructions, the page was often required to wait upon the ladies, rather as attending a sort of superior beings, to whom adoration and obsequious service were due, than as ministering to the convenience of human creatures like himself. The most modest demeanour, the most profound respect, was to be observed in the presence of these fair idols. Thus the veneration due to the female character was taught to the acolyte of chivalry, by his being placed so near female beauty, yet prohibited the familiarity which might discover female weakness. Love frequently mingled with this early devotion, and the connexion betwixt some lady of distinction and her gallant knight, is often, in romantic fiction, supposed to have originated from such early affection. In a romance called *The Golden Thread* (of which we have only seen a modern edition in German, but which has many features of originality,) when the daughter of the Count bestows her annual gifts on her father's household, she gives the page Leofried, in derision, a single thread of gold tissue. To show the value which he places upon the most minute memorial, coming from such a hand, the youth opens a wound in his bosom, and deposits the precious thread in the neighbourhood of his heart. The Dame des Belles Cousines, whom we have already mentioned, was assuredly not the only lady of high rank who was tempted to give a handsome young page the benefit of her experience in completing his education. This led the way to abuse; and the custom of breeding up youths as pages in the houses of the great, although it survived the decay of chivalry, was often rather the introduction to indolence, mischief, and debauchery, than to useful knowledge and the practice of arms. The proper purposes of this preliminary part of chivalrous education, are well given by one of the characters in Ben Jonson's *New Inn*, and he is answered by another, who alleges, with satire resembling that of Juvenal,

the modern corruptions of the order of pages. Lord Lovel has requested mine Host to give him his son for a page. The Host answers, by declaring, he would rather hang his child with his own hand,

"Than damn him to that desperate course of life.

*Lovel* Call you that desperate, which, by a line

Of institution from our ancestors,

Hath been derived down to us, and received

In a succession, for the noblest way

Of breeding up our youth in letters, arms,

Fair mien, discourses, civil exercises,

And all the blazon of a gentleman?

Where can he learn to vault, to ride, to dance,

To mar his body gracefully, to speak

His language purer or to turn his mind

Or manners more to the harmony of nature

Than in those nurseries of nobility?

*Host* Ay, that was when the nursery's self was noble,

And only virtue made it, not the market."

And he replies, by enumerating instances of the decay of honour among the nobles, and of the debauchery of their household pages. In La Noue's *Political and Military Discourses*, is a similar complaint of the hazards to which the morals of young gentlemen were exposed while acting in this domestic capacity. Nevertheless, the custom of having young gentlemen thus bred, continued, in a certain degree, down to the last century, although those destined to such employments became, by degrees, of a lower quality. In some few instances, the institution was maintained in its purity, and the page, when leaving the family in which he was educated, usually obtained a commission. The last instance we know, was that of a gentleman bred a page in the family of the Duchess of Buccleuch and Monmouth, who died during the present reign, a general-officer in his Majesty's service.

When advancing age and experience in the use of arms had qualified the page for the hardships and dangers of actual war, he was removed, from the lowest to the second gradation of chivalry, and became an *Escuyer*, Esquire, or SQUIRE. The derivation of this phrase has been much contested. It has been generally supposed to be derived from its becoming the official duty of the esquire to carry the shield (*Escu*) of the knight his master, until he was about to engage the enemy. Others have fetched the epithet (more remotely certainly) from *Scuria*, a stable, the charger of the knight being under the especial care of the squire. Others, again, ascribe the derivation of the word to the right which the squire himself had to carry a shield, and to blazon it with armorial bearings. This, in later times, became almost the exclusive meaning attached to the appellative esquire, and, accordingly, if the phrase now means any thing, it means a gentleman having a right to carry arms. There is reason, however, to think this is a secondary meaning of the word, for we do not find the word *Escuyer*, applied as a title of rank, until so late as the Ordonnance of Blois, in 1579

The candidate for the honours of chivalry, now an immediate attendant on the knight or nobleman, was withdrawn from the private apartments of the ladies, and only saw them upon occasions of stated ceremony. In great establishments, there were squires of different ranks, and destined for different services; but we shall confine ourselves to those general duties which properly belonged to the office. The squire assisted his master in the offices at once of a modern valet-de-chambre and groom—he attended to dress and to undress him, trained his horses to the menage, and kept his arms bright and burnished. He did the honours of the household to the strangers who visited it, and the reputation of the prince or great lord whom he served, was much exalted by the manner in which these courteous offices were discharged. In the words of Chaucer, describing the character of the squire,

“Curteis he was, lowly and servisable,  
And carf before his fader at the table.”

The squire was also expected to perfect himself in the accomplishments of the period, and not only to be a master of the ceremonial of the feast, but to be capable of enlivening it by his powers of conversation. He was expected to understand chess, draughts, and other domestic games. Poetry and music, if he had any turn for these beautiful arts, and whatever other accomplishments could improve the mind or the person, were accounted to grace his station. And, accordingly, Chaucer's squire, besides that he was “singing or fluting all the day,”

—“Could songs make, and well indite,  
Joust, and eke dance, and well pourtray and write.”

Unquestionably, few possessed all these attributes; but the poet, with his usual precision and vivacity, has given us the picture of a perfect esquire.

To understand the squire's mode of life more particularly, it is necessary to consider that which was led in the courts and castles of the middle ages. Froissart has given us a very striking account of the mode of house-keeping in the family of Gaston, Earl of Foix, a prince whose court was considered as a first-rate nursery for the noble youth; and, from his lively description, we may, in some measure, conceive the mode in which the esquires spent their time. Froissart abode in his house above twelve weeks, much recommended to the favourable notice of the Earl, by his having brought with him a book containing all the songs, ballads, and virilays, which Wencislaus of Bohemia, the gentle Duke of Brabant, had made, and the historian himself had compiled or transcribed. “Every night, after supper,” says Froissart, “I read thereon to him, and while I read there was none durst speak any thing to interrupt me, so much did the Earl delight in listening.” The quotation necessary to describe the Earl of Foix, and the economy of

his household, must necessarily be a long one, but it is a picture, by the hand of an inimitable artist, of a school of chivalry when chivalry was at its highest pitch, and we are unwilling to destroy the likeness by abridging it.

"This erle Gascone of Foix, with whom I was, at that tyme, he was of a fyftie yere of age and nyne; and, I say, I have in my tyme sene many knyghts, kynges, princes, and others, but I neuer saw none like him of personage, nor of so fayre forme, nor so well made; his vysage fayre, sanguyne, and smyling, his eyen gray and amorous, wher as he lyst to set his regarde; in euery thing he was so parfite that he can not be praised to moche; he loued that ought to be beloued, and hated that ought to be hated: he was a wyse knyght, of highe enterprise, and of good counsayle; he neuer had myscreant with hym; he sayd many orisons every day, a nocturn of the psalter, matyns of our Lady, of the Holy Goost, and of the crosse, and dirigé euery day; he gaue fyue florins, in small monies, at his gate to poore folkes for the loue of God; he was large and courtesse in gyftes; he could ryght well take where it parteyned to hym, and to delyuer agayne wher as he ought; he loued houndes of all beestes, wynter and somer he loued huntyng; ne neuer loued folly, outrage, nor foly larges; euery moneth he wolde knowe what he spende: he tooke in his cowntre to receyue his reuenwes, and to serue him, notable persons, that is to saye, xii. recyours, and euer fro ii. monethes to two monethes, two of them shulde serue for his receyte; for, at the two monethes ende, he wolde change and put other two into that offyce; and one that he trusted best shulde be his comptroller, and to hym all other shulde accompt, and the comptroller shulde accoopt to hym by rolles and bokes written, and the comptes to remayne still with therle; he had certeyne cofers in his chambre, out of the whiche oftetyms he wolde take money to give to lordes, knyghtes, and squyers, such as came to hym, for none shulde departe from him without some gift, and yet dayly he multiplyed his treasure, to resyst the adueētures and fortunes that he douēted; he was of good and easy acquayntance with every man, and amorously wold speke to theē; he was short in counsayle, and answers; he had four secretaries, and, at his rising, they must ever be redy at his hande, without any callynge; and whan any letter were delyuered him, and that he had reed it, than he wolde calle them to write agayne, or els for some other thyng. In this estate therle of Foix lyued. And at mydnight, whan he came out of his chambre into the hall to supper, he had ever before hym xii. torches brennyng, borne by xii. variettes standyng before his table all supper; they gaue a gret light, and the hall ever full of knyghtes and squyers, and many other tables dressed to suppe who wolde; ther was none should speke to hym at his table; but if he were called; his meate was lightlye wylde foule, the legges and wynges alonely, and in the day he dyd but lytell eate and drike;

he had great pleasure in armony of instrumeētes ; he coude do it right well hymselfe ; he wold have songes song before him, he wolde gladly se conseytes and fantasies at his table. And or I came to his court, I had ben in many courtes of kynges, dukes, princes, erles, and great ladyes, but I was neuer in none y so well liked me, no ther was none more reioysed in dedes of armes, than the erle dyde : ther was sene in his hall, chaābre, and court, knightes and squyers of honour going up and downe, and talking of armes and amours ; all honour ther was found, all maner of tidynges of every realme and countre ther might be herde, for out of every countree there was resort, for the valy-  
atnesse of this erle.\*

While the courage of the young aspirant to the honours of knight-hood was animated, and his emulation excited, by the society in which he was placed, and the conversation to which he listened,—while every thing was done which the times admitted to refine his manners, and, in a certain degree, to cultivate his understanding ; the personal exercises to which he had been trained, while a page, were now to be pursued with increasing assiduity, proportioned to the increase of his strength. “ He was taught,” says a historian, speaking of Boucicaut, while a squire, “ to spring upon a horse, while armed at all points ; to exercise himself in running, to strike for a length of time with the axe or club ; to dance and throw somersets, entirely armed, excepting the helmet ; to mount on horseback behind one of his comrades, by barely laying his hands on his sleeve ; to raise himself betwixt two partition walls to any height, by placing his back against the one, and his knees and hands against the other ; to mount a ladder, placed against a tower, upon the reverse or under side, solely by the aid of his hands, and without touching the rounds with his feet ; to throw the javelin, to pitch the bar,” to do all, in short, which could exercise the body to feats of strength and agility, in order to qualify him for the exploits of war. For this purpose also, the esquires had their tourneys, separate and distinct from those of the knights. They were usually solemnized on the eve of the more formal and splendid tournaments, in which the knights themselves displayed their valour ; and lighter weapons than those of the knights, though some of the same kind, were employed by the esquires. But, as we shall presently notice, the most distinguished among the esquires were (notwithstanding the high authority of the knight of La Mancha to the contrary) frequently admitted to the honours and dangers of the more solemn encounter.

In actual war the page was not expected to render much service, but that of the squire was important and indispensable. Upon a march he bore the helmet and shield of the knight and led his horse of battle, a tall heavy animal fit to bear the weight of a man in armour, but which was led in hand in marching, while the knight rode an ambling

\* *Froissart's Chronicles*, translated by Lo. d Berners.



hackney. The squire was also qualified to perform the part of an armourer, not only lacing his master's helmet and buckling his cuirass, but also closing with a hammer the rivets by which the various pieces were united to each other. This was a point of the utmost consequence; and many instances occur of mischances happening to celebrated warriors when the duty was negligently performed. In the actual shock of battle, the esquire attended closely on the banner of his master, or on his person if he were only a knight bachelor, kept pace with him during the MELEE, and was at hand to remount him when his steed was slain, or relieve him when oppressed by numbers. If the knight made prisoners they were the charge of the esquire; if the esquire himself fortune'd to make one, the ransom belonged to his master.

On the other hand, the knights who received these important services from their esquires, were expected to display towards them that courteous liberality which made so distinguished a point of the chivalrous character. Lord Audley led the van of the Black Prince's army at the battle of Poitiers, attended by four squires who had promised not to fail him. They distinguished themselves in the front of that bloody day, leaving such as they overcame to be made prisoners by others, and ever pressing forwards where resistance was offered. Thus they fought in the chief of the battle until Lord James Audley was sorely wounded, and his breath failed him. At the last, when the battle was gained, the four faithful esquires bore him out of the press, disarmed him, and staunch'd and dress'd his wounds as they could. As the Black Prince called for the man to whom the victory was in some measure owing, Lord Audley was borne before him in a litter, when the Prince, after having awarded to him the praise and renown above all others who fought on that day, bestowed on him five hundred marks of yearly revenue, to be assigned out of his heritage in England. Lord Audley accepted of the gift with due demonstration of gratitude; but no sooner was he brought to his lodging than he called before him the four esquires by whom he had been so gallantly seconded, and the nobles of his lineage, and inform'd his kinsmen,—

“ ‘Sirs, it hath pleased my Lord the Prince to bestow on me five hundred marks of heritage of which I am unworthy, for I have done him but small service. Behold, Sirs, these four squires, which have always served me truly, and specially this day; the honour that I have is by their valour. Therefore I resign to them and their heirs for ever, in like manner as it was given to me, the noble gift which the Prince hath assigned me.’ The lords beheld each other, and agreed it was a proof of great chivalry to bestow so royal a gift, and gladly undertook to bear witness to the transfer. When Edward heard these tidings, he sent for Lord Audley, and desired to know why he had bestowed on others the gift he had assigned him, and whether it had not been

acceptable to him : ' Sir,' said Lord Audley, ' these four squires have followed me well and truly in several severe actions, and at this battle they served me so well, that had they done nothing else, I had been bound to reward them. I am myself but a single man, but, by aid of their united strength and valour, I was enabled to execute the vow which I had made, to give the onset in the first battle in which the King of England or his sons should be present, and had it not been for them, I must have been left dead on the field. This is the reason I have transferred your Highness's bounty, as to those by whom it was best deserved.' "

The Black Prince not only approved of and confirmed Lord Audley's grant, but conferred upon him, not to be outdone in generosity, a yearly revenue of six hundred marks more, for his own use.\* The name of the esquires, who thus distinguished themselves, and experienced such liberality at the hands of their leader, were Delves of Doddington, Dutton of Dutton, Fowlisurst of Crewe, and Hawkeston of Wreynhill, all Cheshire families. This memorable instance may suffice to show the extent of gratitude which the knights entertained for the faithful service of their squires. But it also leads us to consider some other circumstances relating to the order of esquire.

Although, in its primitive and proper sense, the state of esquire was merely preparatory to that of knighthood, yet it is certain that many men of birth and property rested content with attaining that first step; and though greatly distinguished by their feats of arms, never rose, nor apparently sought to rise, above the rank which it conferred. It does not appear that any of the esquires of Lord Audley were knighted after the battle of Poitiers, although there can be no doubt that their rank, as well as their exploits, entitled them to expect that honour. The truth seems to be, that it may frequently have been more convenient, and scarcely less honourable, to remain in the unenvied and unpretending rank of esquire, than to aspire to that of knighthood, without a considerable fortune to supply the expenses of that dignity. No doubt, in theory, the simplest knight bachelor was a companion, and in some degree equal, with princes. But, in truth, we shall presently see, that, where unsupported by some sort of income to procure suitable equipment and retainers, that dignity was sometimes exposed to ridicule. Many gallant gentlemen, therefore, remained esquires, either attached to the service of some prince or eminent nobleman, or frequently in a state of absolute independence, bringing their own vassals to the field, whom, in such cases, they were entitled to muster under a *Penoncele*, or small triangular streamer, somewhat like the naval pendant of the present day. The reader of history is not, therefore, to suppose, that, where he meets with an esquire of distinguished name, he is therefore, necessarily, to consider him as a youthful candidate for

\* Froissart. Barne's History of Edward III.

the honour of knighthood, and attending upon some knight or noble. This is, indeed, the primitive, but not the uniform meaning of the title. So many men of rank and gallantry appear to have remained esquires, that, by degrees, many of the leading distinctions between them and the knights were relaxed or abandoned. In Froissart's *Chronicles*, we find that esquires frequently led independent bodies of men, and, as we have before hinted, mingled with the knights in the games of Chivalry, the difference chiefly consisting in title, precedence, the shape of the flag under which they arrayed their followers, and the fashion of their armour. The esquires were permitted to bear a shield, emblazoned, as we have already seen, with armorial bearings. There seems to have been some difference in the shape of the helmet, and the French esquire was not permitted to wear the complete hauberk, but only the shirt of mail, without hood or sleeves. But the principal distinction between the independent esquire (terming him such who was attached to no knight's service) and the knight, was the spurs, which the esquire might wear of silver, but by no means gilded.

To return to the esquires, most properly so termed, their dress was, during their period of probation, simple and modest, and ought regularly to have been made of brown, or some other uniform and simple colour. This was not, however, essential. The garment of Chaucer's squire was embrodered like a meadow. The *petit Jehan de Saintré* was supplied with money by his mistress to purchase a silken doublet and embrodered hose. There is also a very diverting account, in the *Memoirs of Bertrand de Guesclin*, of the manner in which he prevailed on his uncle, a covetous old churchman, to assign him money for his equipment on some occasion of splendour. We may therefore hold, that the sumptuary laws of squirehood were not particularly attended to, or strictly enforced.

A youth usually ceased to be a page at fourteen, or a little earlier, and could not regularly receive the honour of knighthood until he was one-and-twenty. But, if their distinguished valour anticipated their years, the period of probation was shortened. Princes of the blood-royal, also, and other persons of very high eminence, had this term abridged, and sometimes so much so, as to throw a ridicule upon the order of knighthood, by admitting within "the temple of honour," as it was the fashion of the times to call it, children, who could neither understand nor discharge the duties of the office to which they were thus prematurely called.

The third and highest rank of chivalry was that of Knighthood. In considering this last dignity, we shall first inquire, how it was conferred; secondly, the general privileges and duties of the order; thirdly, the peculiar ranks into which it was finally divided, and the difference betwixt them.

Knighthood was, in its origin, an order of a republican, or at least

an oligarchic nature ; arising, as has been shown, from the customs of the free tribes of Germany, and, in its essence, not requiring the sanction of a monarch. On the contrary, each knight could confer the order of knighthood upon whomsoever preparatory noviciate and probation had fitted to receive it. The highest potentates sought the *accolade*, or stroke which conferred the honour, at the hands of the worthiest knight whose achievements had dignified the period. Thus Francis I. requested the celebrated Bayard, the *Good Knight without reproach or fear*, to make him ; an honour which Bayard valued so highly, that, on sheathing his sword, he vowed never more to use that blade, except against Turks, Moors, and Saracens. The same principle was carried to extravagance in a romance, where the hero is knighted by the hand of Sir Lancelot of the Lake, when dead. A sword was put into the hand of the skeleton, which was so guided as to let it drop on the neck of the aspirant. In the time of Francis I. it had already become customary to desire this honour at the hands of greatness rather than valour, so that the King's request was considered as an appeal to the first principles of chivalry. In theory, however, the power of creating knights was supposed to be inherent in every one who had reached that dignity. But it was natural that the soldier should desire to receive the highest military honour from the general under whose eye he was to combat, or from the prince or noble at whose court he passed as page and squire through the gradations of his noviciate. It was equally desirable, on the other hand, that the prince or noble should desire to be the immediate source of a privilege so important. And thus, though no positive regulation took place on the subject, ambition on the part of the aspirant, and pride and policy on that of the sovereign princes and nobles of high rank, gradually limited to the latter the power of conferring knighthood, or drew at least an unfavourable distinction between the knights dubbed by private individuals, and those who, with more state and solemnity, received the honoured title at the hand of one of high rank. Indeed, the change which took place respecting the character and consequences of the ceremony, naturally led to a limitation in the right of conferring it. While the order of knighthood merely implied a right to wear arms of a certain description, and to bear a certain title, there could be little harm in intrusting, to any one who had already received the honour, the power of conferring it on others. But when this highest order of chivalry conferred not only personal dignity, but the right of assembling under the banner, or pennon, a certain number of soldiers ; when knighthood implied not merely personal privileges, but military rank, it was natural that sovereigns should use every effort to concentrate the right of conferring such distinction in themselves, or their immediate delegates. And latterly it was held, that the rank of knight only conferred those privileges on such as were dubbed by sovereign princes.

The times and place usually chosen for the creation of knights, were favourable to the claim of the sovereigns to be the proper fountain of chivalry. Knights were usually made either on the eve of battle, or when the victory had been obtained ; or they were created during the pomp of some solemn warning or grand festival. In the former case, the right of creation was naturally referred to the general or prince who led the host , and, in the latter, to the sovereign of the court where the festival was held. The forms in these cases were very different.

When knights were made in the actual field of battle, little solemnity was observed, and the form was probably the same with which private individuals had, in earlier times, conferred the honour on each other. The novice, armed at all points, but without helmet, sword, and spurs, came before the prince or general, at whose hands he was to receive knighthood, and kneeled down, while two persons of distinction, who acted as his godfathers, and were supposed to become pledges for his being worthy of the honour to which he aspired, buckled on his gilded spurs, and belted him with his sword. He then received the accolade, a slight blow on the neck, with the flat of the sword, from the person who dubbed him, who, at the same time, pronounced a formula to this effect " I dub thee knight, in the name of God and St Michael (or in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.) Be faithful, bold, and fortunate." The new-made knight had then only to take his place in the ranks of war, and endeavour to distinguish himself by his forward gallantry in the approaching action, when he was said to win his spurs. It is well known, that, at the battle of Cressy, Edward III. refused to send succours to the Black Prince, until he should hear that he was wounded or dismounted, being determined he should, on that memorable day, have full opportunity to *win his spurs*. It may be easily imagined, that on such occasions, the courage of the young knights was wound up to the highest pitch, and, as many were usually made at the same time, their gallantry could not fail to have influence on the fortune of the day. At the siege of Tholouse (1159,) Henry II. of England made thirty knights at once, one of whom was Malcolm IV. King of Scotland. Even on these occasions, the power of making knights was not understood to be limited to the commander-in-chief. At the fatal battle of Homildown, in 1401, Sir John Swinton, a warrior of distinguished talents, observing the slaughter made by the English archery, exhorted the Scots to rush on to a closer engagement. Adam Gordon, between whose family and that of Swinton a deadly feud existed, hearing this sage counsel, knelt down before Swinton, and prayed him to confer on him the honour of knighthood, which he desired to receive from the wisest and boldest knight in the host. Swinton conferred the order , and they both rushed down upon the English host followed only by a few cavalry. If they had been supported, the attack might have turned the fate of the day. But none followed their

gallant example, and both champions fell. It need hardly be added, that the commander, whether a sovereign prince or not, equally exercised the privilege of conferring knighthood. In the old ballad of the battle of Otterburn, Douglas boasts, that since he had entered England, he had

“ With brand dubb d many a knight ”

But it was not in camps and armies alone that the honours of knighthood were conferred. At the *Cour Plenièrre*, a high court, to which sovereigns summoned their crown vassals at the solemn festivals of the church, and the various occasions of solemnity which occurred in the royal family, from marriage, birth, baptism, and the like, the monarch was wont to confer on novices in chivalry its highest honour, and the ceremonies used on such investiture added to the dignity of the occasion. It was then that the full ritual was observed, which, on the eve of battle, was necessarily abridged or omitted. The candidates watched their arms all night in a church or chapel, and prepared for the honour to be conferred on them, by vigil, fast, and prayer. They were solemnly divested of the brown frock, which was the appropriate dress of the squire, and having been bathed, as a symbol of purification of heart, they were attired in the richer garb appropriate to knighthood. They were then solemnly invested with the appropriate arms of a knight, and it was not unusual to call the attention of the novice to a mystical or allegorical explanation of each piece of armour as it was put on. These exhortations consisted in strange and extravagant parallels betwixt the temporal and spiritual state of welfare, in which the metaphor was hunted down in every possible shape. The under dress of the knight was a close jacket of chamois leather, over which was put the mail shirt, composed of rings of steel artificially fitted into each other, as is still the fashion in some parts of Asia. A suit of plate armour was put on over the mail shirt, and the legs and arms were defended in the same manner. Even this accumulation of defensive armour, was by some thought insufficient. In the combat of the Infantes of Carrion with the champions of the Cid, one of the former was yet more completely defended, and to little purpose

“ Onward into Ferrand's breast, the lance's point is driven  
Full upon his breastplate nothing would avail,  
Two breastplates Ferrand wore, and a coat of mail,  
The two are riven in sunder, the third stood him in stead,  
The mail sunk in his breast, the mail and the spear head  
The blood burst from his mouth, and all men thought him dead ”

The novice being accoutred in his knightly armour, but without helmet, sword, and spurs, a rich mantle was flung over him, and he was conducted in solemn procession to the church or chapel in which the

\* See Translations from the Spanish metrical Romance on the subject of the Cid, appended to Mr Southey's Cid

ceremony was to be performed, supported by his godfathers, and attended with as much pomp as circumstances admitted. High mass was then said, and the novice, advancing to the altar, received from the sovereign the accolade. The churchman present, of highest dignity, often belted on his sword, which, for that purpose, had been previously deposited on the altar, and the spurs were sometimes fastened on by ladies of quality. The oath of chivalry was lastly taken, to be loyal to God, the king, and the ladies. Such were the outlines of the ceremony, which, however, was varied according to circumstances. A king of Portugal knighted his son in presence of the dead body of the Marquis of Marialva, slain in that day's action, and impressively conjured the young prince to do his duty in life and death like the good knight who lay dead before him. Alms to the poor, largesses to the heralds and minstrels, a liberal gift to the church, were necessary accompaniments to the investiture of a person of rank. The new made knight was conducted from the church with music and acclamations, and usually mounted his horse and executed some curvets in presence of the multitude, couching his lance, and brandishing it as if impatient to open his knightly career. It was at such times, also, that the most splendid tournaments were executed, it being expected that the young knights would there display the utmost efforts to distinguish themselves.

Such being the solemnities with which knighthood was imposed, it is no wonder that the power of conferring it should, in peace as well as in war, be almost confined to sovereign princes, or nobles who nearly equalled them in rank and independence. By degrees these restrictions were drawn more and more close, and at length it was held that none but a sovereign or a commander-in-chief, displaying the royal banner, and vested with plenary and vice-regal authority, could confer the degree of knighthood. Queen Elizabeth was particularly jealous of this part of her prerogative, and nothing more excited her displeasure and indignation against her favourite Essex, than the profuseness with which he distributed the honour at Cadiz, and afterwards in Ireland. These anecdotes, however, belong to the decay of chivalry.

The knight had several privileges of dignity and importance. He was associated into a rank wherein kings and princes were, in one sense, only his equals. He took precedence in war and in counsel, and was addressed by the respectful title of *Messire* in French, and *Sir* in English, and his wife by that of *Madame* and *Dame*. A knight was also, in point of military rank, qualified to command any body of men under a thousand. His own service was performed on horseback and in complete armour, of many various fashions, according to the taste of the warriors and the fashion of the age. Chaucer has enumerated some of these varieties —

“ With him ther wenten knights many on.  
Som wol ben armed in an habergeon,  
And in a brest plate, and in a gipon ;  
And som wol have a pair of plates large ;  
And som wol have a pruse shield, or a targe ;  
Som wol ben armed on his legge wele,  
And have an axe, and some a mace of stele.  
Ther n'is no newe guise, that it n'as old.  
Armed they weren, as I have you told,  
Everich after his opinon.”

The weapons of offence, however, most appropriate to knighthood were the lance and sword. They had frequently a battle-axe or mace at their saddle-bow, a formidable weapon even to men sheathed in iron like themselves. The knight had also a dagger which he used when at close quarters. It was called the dagger of mercy, probably because, when unsheathed, it behoved the antagonist to crave mercy or to die. The management of the lance and of the horse was the principal requisite of knighthood. To strike the foeman either on the helmet or full upon the breast with the point of the lance, and at full speed, was accounted perfect practice ; to miss him, or to break a lance across, *i. e.* athwart the body of the antagonist, without striking him with the point, was accounted an awkward failure ; to strike his horse, or to hurt his person under the girdle, was conceived a foul or felon action, and could only be excused by the hurry of a general encounter. When the knights, from the nature of the ground, or other circumstances, alighted to fight on foot, they used to cut some part from the length of their spears, in order to render them more manageable, like the pikes used by infantry. But their most formidable onset was when mounted and “ in host.” They seem then to have formed squadrons not unlike the present disposition of cavalry in the field—their squires forming the rear-rank, or performing the part of serrefiles. As the horses were trained in the tourneys and exercises to run upon each other without flinching, the shock of two such bodies of heavy-armed cavalry was dreadful, and the event usually decided the battle ; for, until the Swiss showed the superior steadiness which could be exhibited by infantry, all great actions were decided by the men-at-arms. The yeomanry of England, indeed, formed a singular exception ; and, from the dexterous use of the long-bow, to which they were trained from infancy, were capable of withstanding and destroying the mail-clad chivalry both of France and Scotland. Their shafts, according to the exaggerating eloquence of a monkish historian, Thomas of Walsingham, penetrated steel coats from side to side, transfixed helmets, and even splintered lances, and pierced through swords ! But, against every other pedestrian adversary, the knights, squires, and men-at-arms, had the most decided advantage, from their impenetrable armour, the strength of their horses, and the fury of their onset. To render success yet more certain, and attack less hazardous, the horse, on the safety of which



the rider so much depended, was armed *en-barbe*, as it was called, like himself. A masque made of iron covered the animal's face and ears; it had a breast-plate, and armour for the croupe. The strongest horses were selected for this service; they were generally stallions, and to ride a mare was reckoned base and unknighly.

To distinguish him in battle, as his face was hid by the helmet, the knight wore above his armour a surcoat, as it was called, like a herald's coat, on which his arms were emblazoned. Others had them painted on the shield, a small triangular buckler of light wood, covered with leather, and sometimes plated with steel, which, as best suited him, the knight could either wield on his left arm, or suffer to hang down from his neck, as an additional defence to his breast, when the left hand was required for the management of the horse. The shape of these shields is preserved, being that on which heraldic coats are most frequently blazoned. But it is something remarkable, that not one of those *heater*\* shields has been preserved in the Tower, or, so far as we know, in any English collection. The helmet was surmounted by a crest, which the knight adopted after his own fancy. There was deadly offence taken if one knight, without right, assumed the armorial bearings of another; and history is full of disputes on that head, some of which terminated fatally. The heralds were the persons appealed to on these occasions, when the dispute was carried on in peace, and hence flowed the science, as it was called, of Heraldry, with all its fantastic niceties. By degrees the crest and device became also hereditary, as well as the bearings on the shield. In addition to his armorial bearings, the knight distinguished himself in battle by shouting out his war-cry, which was echoed by his followers. It was usually the name of some favourite saint, united with that of his own family. If the knight had followers under his command, they re-echoed his war-cry, and rallied round his pennon or flag at the sound. The pennon differed from the penoncel, or triangular streamer which the squire was entitled to display, being double the breadth, and indented at the end like the tail of a swallow. It presented the appearance of two penoncels united at the end next the staff, a consideration which was not perhaps out of view in determining its shape. Of course the reader will understand that those knights only displayed a pennon who had retainers to support and defend it; the mounting this ensign being a matter of privilege, not of obligation.

Froissart's heart never fails to overflow when he describes the encounter of a body of men-at-arms, arrayed in the manner we have described; he dwells with enthusiasm on the leading circumstances. The waving of banners and pennons, the dashing of spurs into the sides of chargers, and their springing forward to battle: the glittering of armour, the glancing of plumes, the headlong shock and splintering of the lances, the swords flashing through the dust over the heads of

\* So called because resembling in shape the heater of a smoothing iron

the combatants, the thunder of the horses' feet and the clash of armour, mingled with the war-cry of the combatants and the groans of the dying, form the mingled scene of tumult, strife, and death, which the Canon has so frequently transferred to his chivalrous pages.

It was not in war alone that the adventurous knight was to acquire fame. It was his duty, as we have seen, to seek adventures throughout the world, whereby to exalt his own fame and the beauty of his mistress, which inspired such deeds. In our remarks upon the general spirit of the institution, we have already noticed the frantic enterprises which were seriously undertaken and punctually executed by knights desirous of a name. On those occasions, the undertaker of so rash an enterprise often owed his life to the sympathy of his foes, who had great respect for any one engaged in the discharge of a vow of chivalry. When Sir Robert Knowles passed near Paris, at the head of an English army, in the reign of Edward III., the following remarkable incident took place :

"Now it happened, one Tuesday morning, when the English began to decamp, and had set fire to all the villages wherein they were lodged, so that the fires were distinctly seen from Paris, a knight of their army, who had made a vow, the preceding day, that he would advance as far as the barriers and strike them with his lance, did not break his oath. but set off with his lance in his hand, his target on his neck, and completely armed except his helmet, and, spurring his steed, was followed by his squire on another courser, carrying the helmet. When he approached Paris, he put on the helmet, which his squire laced behind. He then galloped away, sticking spurs into his horse, and advanced prancing to strike the barriers. They were then open, and the lords and barons within imagined he intended to enter the town ; but he did not so mean, for having struck the gates according to his vow, he checked his horse and turned about. The French knights, who saw him thus retreat, cried out to him, 'Get away ! get away ! thou hast well acquitted thyself.' As for the name of this knight, I am ignorant of it, nor do I know from what country he came ; but he bore for his arms gules à deux foussettes noir, with une bordure noir non endentée.

"However, an adventure befell him, from which he had not so fortunate an escape. On his return, he met a butcher on the pavement in the suburbs, a very strong man, who had noticed him as he had passed him, and who had in his hand a very sharp and heavy hatchet with a long handle. As the knight was returning alone, and in a careless manner, the valiant butcher came on one side of him, and gave him such a blow between the shoulders, that he fell on his horse's neck : he recovered himself, but the butcher repeated the blow on his head, so that the axe entered it. The knight, through excess of pain, fell to the earth. and the horse galloped away to the squire, who was wait-

ing for his master in the fields at the extremity of the suburbs. The squire caught the courser, but wondered what was become of his master ; for he had seen him gallop to the barriers, strike them, and then turn about to come back. He therefore set out to look for him ; but he had not gone many paces before he saw him in the hands of four fellows, who were beating him as if they were hammering on an anvil. This so much frightened the squire, that he dared not advance further, for he saw he could not give him any effectual assistance ; he therefore returned as speedily as he could.

"Thus was this knight slain ; and those lords who were posted at the barriers had him buried in holy ground. The squire returned to the army and related the misfortune which had befallen his master. All his brother warriors were greatly displeased thereat."—(JOHNES'S *Froissart*, vol. ii. p. 63.)

An equally singular undertaking was that of Galeazzo of Mantua, as rehearsed by the venerable Doctor Paris de Puteo, in his treatise *De Duello et re Militari*, and by Brantome in his *Essay on Duels*. Queen Joan of Naples, at a magnificent feast given in her castle of Gaeta, had presented her hand to Galeazzo, for the purpose of opening the ball. The dance being finished, the gallant knight kneeled down before his royal partner, and, in order to make fitting acknowledgment of the high honour done him, took a solemn vow to wander through the world wherever deeds of arm should be exercised, and not to rest until he had subdued two valiant knights, and had presented them prisoners at her royal footstool, to be disposed of at her pleasure. Accordingly, after a year spent in visiting various scenes of action in Brittany, England, France, Burgundy, and elsewhere, he returned like a falcon with his prey in his clutch, and presented two prisoners of knightly rank to Queen Joan. The queen received the gift very graciously ; and, declining to avail herself of the right she had to impose rigorous condition on the captives, she gave them liberty without ransom, and bestowed on them, over and above, several marks of liberality. For this she is highly extolled by Brantome and Dr. Paris, who take the opportunity of censuring the very opposite conduct of the Canons of St. Peter's Church at Rome, upon whom a certain knight had bestowed a prisoner taken in single combat. These ungracious churchmen received the gift as if it had been that of a wild beast for a menagerie, permitting the poor captive the freedom of the church indeed, but prohibiting him to go one step beyond the gate. In which condition, worse than death, they detained the vanquished knight for some time, and were justly blamed, as neither understanding Christian charity nor gentlemanlike courtesy.

We return to consider the duties of a knight. His natural and proper element was war. But in time of peace when there was no scope for the fiery spirit of chivalry, the knights attended the tourneys

proclaimed by different princes, or, if these amusements did not occur, they themselves undertook feats of arms, to which they challenged all competitors. The nature of these challenges will be best understood from an abridged account of the *pas d'armes*, called the *Jousts* of Saint Inglebert, or Sandying Fields. This emprise was sustained by three gallant knights of France, Bouçicaud, Reynold de Roy, and Saint Py or Saimpi. Their articles bound them to abide thirty days at Saint Inglebert in the marches of Calais, there to undertake the encounter of all knights and squires, Frenchmen, or strangers, who should come hither, for the breaking of five spears, sharp, or with rockets, at their pleasure. On their lodgings they hung two shields called of peace and war, with their armorial blazons on each. The stranger desiring to just was invited to come or send, and touch which shield he would. The weapons of courtesy were to be employed if he chose the shield of peace, if that of war, the defenders were to give him the desired encounter with sharp weapons. The stranger knights were invited to bring some noblemen with them, to assist in judging the field, and the proclamation concludes with an entreaty to knights and squires, strangers, that they will not hold this offer as made for any pride, hatred, or ill-will; but only that the challengers do it to have their honourable company and acquaintance, which, with their whole heart, they desire. They were assured of a fair field, without fraud or advantage; and it was provided that the shields used should not be covered with iron or steel. The French king was highly joyful of this gallant challenge (although some of his council doubted the wisdom of permitting it to go forth), and exhorted the challengers to regard the honour of their prince and realm, and spare no cost at the solemnity, for which he was willing to contribute ten thousand francs. A number of knights and squires came from England to Calais to accept this gallant invitation; and at the entrance of the "fresh and jolly month of May," the challengers pitched three green pavilions in a fair plain between Calais and the Abbey of Saint Inglebert. Two shields hung before each pavilion, with the arms of the owner.

"On the 21st of the month of May, as it had been proclaimed, the three knights were properly armed, and their horses properly saddled, according to the laws of the tournament. On the same day, those knights who were in Calais sallied forth, either as spectators or tilters, and, being arrived at the spot, drew up on one side. The place of the tournament was smooth and green with grass.

"Sir John Holland was the first who sent his squire to touch the war-target of Sir Bouçicaud, who instantly issued from his pavilion completely armed. Having mounted his horse and grasped his spear, which was stiff and well steeled, they took their distances. When the two knights had for a short time eyed each other, they spurred their horses, and met full gallop with such a force that Sir Bouçicaud pierced

the shield of the Earl of Huntingdon, and the point of his lance slipped along his arm, but without wounding him. The two knights, having passed, continued their gallop to the end of the list. This course was much praised. At the second course, they hit each other slightly, but no harm was done ; and their horses refused to complete the third.

"The Earl of Huntingdon, who wished to continue the tilt, and was heated, returned to his place, expecting that Sir Boucicaut would call for his lance ; but he did not, and showed plainly he would not that day tilt more with the Earl. Sir John Holland, seeing this, sent his squire to touch the war-target of the Lord de Sainpi. This knight, who was waiting for the combat, sallied out from his pavilion, and took his lance and shield. When the Earl saw he was ready, he violently spurred his horse, as did the Lord de Sainpi. They couched their lances, and pointed them at each other. At the onset, their horses crossed ; notwithstanding which, they met ; but by this crossing, which was blamed, the Earl was unhelmed. He returned to his people, who soon rehelmed him ; and, having resumed their lances, they met full gallop, and hit each other with such a force, in the middle of their shields, they would have been unhorsed, had they not kept tight seats by the pressure of their legs against their horses' sides. They went to the proper places, where they refreshed themselves, and took breath.

"Sir John Holland, who had a great desire to shine at this tournament, had his helmet braced, and regrasped his spear : when the Lord de Sainpi, seeing him advance on the gallop, did not decline meeting, but, spurring his horse on instantly, they gave blows on their helmets, that were, luckily, of well-tempered steel, which made sparks of fire fly from them. At this course the Lord de Sainpi lost his helmet ; but the two knights continued their career, and returned to their places.

"This tilt was much praised, and the English and French said, that the Earl of Huntingdon, Sir Boucicaut, and the Lord de Sainpi, had excellently well justed, without sparing or doing themselves any damage. The Earl wished to break another lance in honour of his lady but it was refused him. He then quitted the lists to make room for others, for he had run his six lances with such ability and courage as gained him praise from all sides."—(JOHNE'S *Froissart*, vol. iv., p. 143.)

The other justs were accomplished with similar spirit ; Sir Peter Courtney, Sir John Russel, Sir Peter Sherburn, Sir William Clifton, and other English knights, sustaining the honour of their country against the French, who behaved with the greatest gallantry ; and the whole was regarded as one of the most gallant enterprises which had been fulfilled for some time.

Besides these dangerous amusements, the unsettled and misruled state of things during the feudal times, found a gentle knight, anxious

to support the oppressed and to put down injustice, and agreeably to his knightly vow, frequent opportunities to exercise himself in the use of arms. There were everywhere to be found oppressors to be chastised, and evil customs to be abolished, and the knight's occupation not only permitted, but actually bound him to volunteer his services in such cases. We shall greatly err if we suppose that the adventures told in romance are as fictitious as its magic, its dragons, and its fairies. The machinery was indeed imaginary, or rather, like that of Homer, it was grounded on the popular belief of the times. But the turn of incidents resembled, in substance, those which passed almost daily under the eye of the narrator. Even the stupendous feats of prowess displayed by the heroes of those tales against the most overwhelming odds, were not without parallel in the history of the times. When men fought hand to hand, the desperate exertions of a single champion, well mounted and armed in proof, were sometimes sufficient to turn the fate of a disputed day, and the war cry of a well known knight struck terror farther than his arms. The advantage possessed by such an invulnerable champion over the half-naked infantry of the period, whom he might pursue and cut down at his pleasure, was so great, that, in the insurrection of the peasants called the *Jacquerie*, the Earl of Foix and the Captal de Buche, their forces not being nearly as one to ten, hesitated not to charge these disorderly insurgents, with their men at-arms, and were supposed to have slain nearly seven thousand, following the execution of the fugitives with as little mercy as the peasants had shown during the brief success of their rebellion.

The right which crown-vassals claimed and exercised, of imposing exorbitant tolls and taxes within their domains, was often resisted by the knights errant of the day, whose adventures, in fact, approached much nearer to those of Don Quixote than perhaps our readers are aware of. For although the Knight of La Mancha was, perhaps, two centuries too late in exercising his office of redresser of wrongs, and although his heated imagination confounded ordinary objects with such as were immediately connected with the exercise of Chivalry, yet at no great distance from the date of the inimitable romance of Cervantes, real circumstances occurred, of a nature nearly as romantic as the achievements which Don Quixote aspired to execute. In the more ancient times, the wandering knight could not go far without finding some gentleman oppressed by a powerful neighbour, some captive immured in a feudal dungeon, some orphan deprived of his heritage, some traveller pillaged, some convent or church violated, some lady in need of a champion, or some prince engaged in a war with a powerful adversary,—all of which incidents furnished fit occasion for the exercise of his valour. By degrees, as order became more generally established, and the law of each state began to be strong enough for the protection of the subject, the interference of these self-authorized and self-depen

dent champions, who besides were, in all probability, neither the most judicious or moderate, supposing them to be equitable, mediators, became a nuisance rather than an assistance to civil society; and undoubtedly this tended to produce those distinctions in the order of knighthood which we are now to notice.

The most ancient, and originally the sole order of knighthood, was that of the Knight-Bachelor. This was the proper degree conferred by one knight on another, without the interference either of prince, noble, or churchman, and its privileges and duties approached nearly to those of the knight-errant. Were it possible for human nature to have acted up to the pitch of merit required by the statutes of chivalry, this order might have proved for a length of time a substitute for imperfect policy,—a remedy against feudal tyranny,—a resource for the weak when oppressed by the strong. Unquestionably, in many individual instances, knights were all that we have described them. But the laws of chivalry, like those of the ascetic orders, while announcing a high tone of virtue and self-denial, unfortunately afforded the strongest temptations to those who professed its vows to abuse the character which they assumed. The degree of knighthood was easily attained, and did not subject the warrior on whom it was bestowed to any particular tribunal in case of his abusing the powers which it conferred. Thus the knight became, in many instances, a wandering and licentious soldier, carrying from castle to castle, and from court to court, the offer of his mercenary sword, and frequently abusing his character, to oppress those whom his oath bound him to protect. The license and foreign vices imported by those who had returned from the crusades, the poverty also to which noble families were reduced by those fatal expeditions, all aided to throw the quality of knight-bachelor lower in the scale of honour, when unsupported by birth, wealth, or the command of followers.

The poorest knight-bachelor, however, long continued to exercise the privileges of the order. Their title of bachelor (or *Bas Chevalier*, according to the best derivation) marked that they were early held in inferior estimation to those more fortunate knights, who had extensive lands and numerous vassals. They either attached themselves to the service of some prince or rich noble, and were supported at their expense, or they led the life of mere adventurers. There were many knights, who, like Sir Gaudwin in the romance of *Partenopex de Blois*, subsisted by passing from one court, camp, and tournament to another, and contrived even, by various means open to persons of that profession, to maintain, at least for a time, a fair and goodly appearance.

‘So riding, they o’ertake an errant-knight  
Well horsed, and large of limb, Sir Gaudwin hight;  
He nor of castle nor of land was lord,  
Houseless, he reap’d the harvest of the sword,

And now, not more on fame than profit bent,  
 Rode with blithe heart unto the tournament ;  
 For cowardice he held it deadly sin,  
 And sure his mind and bearing were akin,  
 The face an index to the soul within  
 It seem'd that he, such pomp his train bewray'd,  
 Had shaped a goodly fortune by his blade ,  
 His knaves were, point device, in livery dight,  
 With sumpter nags, and tents for shelter in the night "

These bachelor-knights, as Mr. Rose has well described Sir Gaudwin, set their principal store by valour in battle ; and perhaps it was the only quality of chivalry which they at all times equally prized and possessed. Their boast was to be the children of war and fight, living in no other atmosphere but what was mingled with the dust of conflict, and the hot breath of charging steeds. A "gentle bachclor" is so described in one of the *Fabliaux* translated by Mr. Way

"What gentle bachelor is he,  
 Sword begot in fighting field,  
 Rock d and cradled in a shield,  
 Whose infant food a helm did yie'd "

His resistless gallantry in tournament and battle,—the rapidity with which he traversed land and sea, from England and Switzerland, to be present at each remarkable occasion of action,—with his hardihood in enduring every sort of privation,—and his generosity in rewarding minstrels and heralds,—his life of hazard and turmoil,—and his deeds of strength and fame,—are all enumerated. But we hear nothing of his redressing wrongs, or of his protecting the oppressed. The knight-bachelor, according to this picture, was a valiant prize-fighter, and lived by the exercise of his weapons.

In war, the knight-bachelor had an opportunity of maintaining, and even of enriching himself, if fortunate, by the ransom of such prisoners as he happened to take in fight. If, in this way, he accumulated wealth, he frequently employed it in levying followers, whose assistance, with his own, he hired out to such sovereigns as were willing to set a sufficient price on his services. In time of peace, the tournaments afforded, as we have already observed, a certain means of income to these adventurous champions. The horses and arms of the knights who succumbed on such occasions, were forfeited to the victors, and these the wealthy were always willing to reclaim by a payment in money. At some of the achievements in arms, the victors had the right, by the conditions of the encounter, to impose severe terms on the vanquished, besides the usual forfeiture of horse and armour. Sometimes the unsuccessful combatant ransomed himself from imprisonment, or other hard conditions, by a sum of money ; a transaction in which the knights-bachelors, such as we have described them, readily engaged. These adventurers called the sword which they used



in tournaments, their *gagne-pain*, or bread-winner, as itinerant fiddlers of our days denominate their instruments.

"Dont i est gaigne pain nommée,  
Car par li est gaignies li pains "

*Pelerinage du Monde*, par Guigneville

Men of such roving and military habits, subsisting by means so precarious, and lying under little or no restraint from laws, or from the social system, were frequently dangerous and turbulent members of the commonwealth. Every usurper, tyrant, or rebel, found knights-bachelors to espouse his cause in numbers proportioned to his means of expenditure. They were precisely the "landless resolute," whom any adventurer of military fame or known enterprise could easily collect,

"For food and diet, to some enterprise  
That hath a stomach in t "

Sometimes knights were found who placed themselves directly in opposition to all law and good order, headed independent bands of depredators, or, to speak plainly, of robbers, seized upon some castle as a place of temporary retreat, and laid waste the country at their pleasure. In the disorderly reigns of Stephen and of King John, many such leaders of banditti were found in England. And France, in the reign of John and his successors, was almost destroyed by them. Many of these leaders were knights, or squires, and almost all pretended that in their lawless licence they only exercised the rights of chivalry, which permitted, and even enjoined, its votaries to make war without any authority but their own, whenever a fair cause of quarrel occurred.

These circumstances brought the profession of knight-bachelor into suspicion, as, in other cases, the poverty of those who held the honour exposed it to contempt in their person. The sword did not always reap a good harvest, an enterprise was unfortunate, or a knight was discomfited. In such circumstances, he was obliged to sell his arms and horse, and endure all the scorn which is attached to poverty. In the beautiful lay of Lanval, and in the corresponding tale of Gruelan, the story opens with the picture of the hero reduced to indigence, dunned by his landlord, and exposed to contempt by his beggarly equipment. And when John de Vienne and his French men-at-arms returned from Scotland, disgusted with the poverty and ferocity of their allies, without having had any opportunity to become wealthy at the expense of the English, and compelled before their departure to give satisfaction for the insolencies which they committed towards the inhabitants, "divers knights and squires had passage and so returned, some into Flanders, and as wind and weather would drive them, without horse and harness, right poor and feeble, cursing the day that ever they came into Scotland, saying that never man had so hard a voyage." (Berner's *Froissart*, vol. ii. (reprint) p. 32.) The frequent prohibition

of tournaments, both by the Church and by the more peaceful sovereigns, had also its necessary effect in impoverishing the knights-bachelors, to whom, as we have seen, these exhibitions afforded one principal means of subsistence. This is touched upon in one of the French *fabliaux*, as partly the cause of the poverty of a chevalier, whose distresses are thus enumerated :

" Listen, gentles, while I tell  
How this knight in fortune fell  
Lands nor vineyards had he none,  
Justs and war his living won ,  
Well on horseback could he prance  
Boldly could he break a lance,  
Well he knew each warlike use ;  
But there came a time of truce,  
Peaceful was the land around,  
Nowhere heard a trumpet sound  
Rust the shield and falchion hid,  
Just and tourney were forbid ,  
A l his means of living gone,  
Ermine mantle had he none,  
And in pawn had long been laid  
Cap and mantle of brocade,  
Harness rich and charger stout  
All were eat and drunken out ' \*

As the circumstances which we have mentioned, tended to bring the order of knight-bachelor in many instances into contempt, the great and powerful attempted to intrench themselves within a circle which should be inaccessible to the needy adventurers whom we have described. Hence the institution of knights-banneret was generally received.

The distinction between the knight-banneret and the knight-bachelor was merely in military rank and precedence, and the former may rather be accounted an institution of policy than of chivalry. The bachelor displayed, or was entitled to display, a pennon or forked ensign. The knight-banneret had the right of raising a proper *banner*, from which his appellation was derived. He held a middle rank, beneath the barons or great feudatories of the crown, and above the knights-bachelors. The banner from which he took his title was a flag squared at the end, which, however, in strictness was oblong, and not an exact square on all the sides, which was the proper emblem of a baron. Du Tillet reports, that the Count de Leval challenged Sir Roul de Couequens' right to raise a square banner, being a banneret, and not a baron, and adds, that he was generally ridiculed for this presumption, and called the knight with the square ensign. The circumstance of the encroachment plainly shows, that the distinction was not absolutely settled, nor have we found the ensign of the bannerets anywhere described except as being generally a square standard. Indeed it was

\* See the original in the republication of Barbazan's *Fabliaux* vol III, p. 470.

only the pennon of the knight a little altered; for he who aspired to be a banneret received no higher gradation in chivalry, as attached to his person, and was inducted into his new privileges, merely by the commander-in-chief, upon the eve of battle, cutting off the swallow-tail or forked termination of the pennon.

In the appendix of Joinville's *Memoirs*, there is an essay on the subject of the bannerets, in which the following account of them is quoted from the ancient book of Ceremonies :

**"COMME UN BACHELIER PEUT LEVER BANNIERE, ET DEVENIR BANNERET.**

"Quant un bachelier a grandement servi et suivy la guerre, et que il a assez terre, et que 'il puisse avoir gentilshommes ses hommes, et pour accompagner sa banniere, il peut licitement lever banniere, et non autrement. Car nul homme ne doit porter, ne lever banniere en bataille, s'il n'a du moins cinquante hommes d'armes, tous ses hommes et les archiers, et arbalestriers qui y appartiennent. Et s'il les a 'il doit à la première bataille, ou il se trouvera, apporter un pennon, de ses armes, et doit venir au connestable, ou aux marischaux, ou à celui qui sera lieutenant de l'ost pour le prince, requirer qu'il porte banniere; et s'il lui octroient, doit sommer les heraux pour tesmoignage, et doivent couper la queue du pennon, et alors de loit porter et lever avant les autres bannieres, au dessoubs des autres barons."

There is this same ceremonial, in a chapter, respecting the banneret, in these terms :

**"COMME SE DOIT MAINTENIR UN BANNERET EN BATAILLE.**

"Le banneret doit avoir cinquante lances, et les gens de trait qui y appartiennent : c'est à savoir les xxv. pour lui, et sa banniere garder. Et doit estre sa banniere dessoubs des barons. Et s'il y a autres bannieres ils doivent mettre leurs bannieres à l'onneur, chacun selon son endroit, et pareillement tout homme qui porte banniere."

Froissart, always our best and most amusing authority, gives an account of the manner in which the celebrated Sir John Chandos was made banneret by the Black Prince, before the battle of Navarete. The whole scene forms a striking picture of an army of the middle ages moving to battle. Upon the pennons of the knights, penoncelles of the squires, and banners of the barons and bannerets, the army formed, or, in modern phrase, dressed its line. The usual word of the attack was, "Advance banners, in the name of God and Saint George."

"When the sun was risen, it was a beautiful sight to view these battalions, with their brilliant armour glittering with its beams. In this manner, they nearly approached to each other. The Prince, with a few attendants, mounted a small hill, and saw very clearly the enemy marching straight towards them. Upon descending this hill, he extended his line of battle in the plain, and then halted.

"The Spaniards, seeing the English halted, did the same, in order of battle; then each man tightened his armour, and made ready for instant combat.

"Sir John Chandos advanced in front of the battalions with his banner uncased in his hand. He presented it to the Prince, saying, 'My lord, here is my banner; I present it to you, that I may display it in whatever manner shall be most agreeable to you; for, thanks to God, I have now sufficient lands that will enable me so to do, and maintain the rank which it ought to hold.

"The Prince, Don Pedro being present, took the banner in his hands, which was blazoned with a sharp stake gules, on a field argent; after having cut off the tail to make it square, he displayed it, and, returning it to him by the handle, said, 'Sir John, I return you your banner, God give you strength and honour to preserve it.'

"Upon this, Sir John left the Prince, went back to his men, with the banner in his hand, 'Gentlemen, behold my banner and yours; you will, therefore, guard it as it becomes you.' His companions, taking the banner, replied with much cheerfulness, that 'if it pleased God and St. George, they would defend it well, and act worthily of it, to the utmost of their abilities.'

"The banner was put into the hands of a worthy English squire, called William Allestry, who bore it with honour that day, and loyally acquitted himself in the service. The English and Gascons soon after dismounted on the heath, and assembled very orderly together, each lord under his banner or pennon, in the same battle-array as when they passed the mountains. It was delightful to see and examine these banners and pennons, with the noble army that was under them."

It should not be forgotten, that Sir John Chandos exerted himself so much to maintain his new honour, that, advancing too far among the Spaniards, he was unhorsed, and, having grappled with a warrior of great strength, called Martin Ferrand, he fell undermost, and must have been slain had he not bethought him of his dagger, with which he stabbed his gigantic antagonist. (*Johnes's Froissart*, vol. i. p. 731.)

A banneret was expected to bring into the field at least thirty men-at-arms, that is, knights or squires mounted, and in complete order, at his own expense. Each man-at-arms, besides his attendants on foot, ought to have a mounted crossbowman, and a horseman armed with a bow and axe. Therefore, the number of horsemen alone, who assembled under a banner, was at least three hundred, and, including followers on foot, might amount to a thousand men. The banneret might, indeed, have arrayed the same force under a pennon, but his accepting a banner bound him to bring out that number at least. There is no room, however, to believe, that these regulations were very strictly observed.

In the reign of Charles VII., the nobles of France made a remon-

strance to the king, setting forth, that their estates were so much wasted by the long and fatal wars with England, that they could no longer support the number of men attached to the dignity of banneret. The companies of men-at-arms, which had hitherto been led by knights of that rank, and the distinction between knights-bannerets and knights-bachelors, was altogether disused from that period.\* In England the title survived, but in a different sense. Those who received knighthood in a field of battle, where the royal standard was displayed, were called knights bannerets. Thus, King Edward VII. notices in his *Journal*, that, after the battle of Pinkie, "Mr. Brian Sadler and Vane were made bannerets."

The distinction of banneret was not the only subdivision of knighthood. The special privileged fraternities, orders, or associations of knights, using a particular device, or embodied for a particular purpose, require also to be noticed. These might, in part, be founded upon the union which knights were wont to enter into with each other as "companions in arms," than which nothing was esteemed more sacred. The partners were united for weal and woe, and no crime was accounted more infamous than to desert or betray a companion-at-arms. They had the same friends and the same foes, and as it was the genius of chivalry to carry every virtuous and noble sentiment to the most fantastic extremity, the most extravagant proofs of fidelity to this engagement were often exacted or bestowed. The beautiful romance of *Ames and Amélin*, in which a knight slays his own child to make a salve with its blood to cure the leprosy of his brother-in-law, turns entirely on this extravagant pitch of sentiment.

To this fraternity only two persons could, with propriety, bind themselves. But the various orders, which had in view particular objects of war, or were associated under the authority of particular sovereigns, were also understood to form a bond of alliance and brotherhood amongst themselves.

The great orders of the Templars and Knights-Hospitallers of Saint John of Jerusalem, as well as that of the Teutonic knights, were military associations, created, the former for defence of the Holy Land, and the last for conversion (by the edge of the sword of course) of the Pagans in the north of Europe. They were managed by commanders or superintendents, and by a grand master, forming a sort of military republic, the individuals of which were understood to have no distinct property or interest from the order in general. But the system and history of these associations will be found under the proper heads.

Other subdivisions arose from the various associations, also called orders, formed by the different sovereigns of Europe, not only for the natural purpose of drawing around their persons the flower of knight-

\* See the works of Pasquier, Du Tillet, Le Gendre, and other French antiquaries.

hood, but often with political views of much deeper import. The romances which were the favourite reading of the time, or which, at least, like the servant in the comedy, the nobles "had read to them," and which were on all occasions quoted gravely, as the authentic and authoritative records of chivalry, afforded the most respectable precedents for the formation of such fraternities under the auspices of sovereign princes, the Round Table of King Arthur, and the Paladins of Charlemagne, forming cases strictly in point. Edward III., whose policy was equal to his love of chivalry, failed not to avail himself of these precedents, not only for the exaltation of military honour and exercise of warlike feats, but questionless that he might draw around him, and attach to his person, the most valiant knights from all quarters of Europe. For this purpose, in the year 1344, he proclaimed as well in Scotland, France, Germany, Hainault, Spain, and other foreign countries, as in England, that he designed to revive the Round Table of King Arthur, offering free conduct and courteous reception to all who might be disposed to attend the splendid justs to be held upon that occasion at Windsor Castle. This solemn festival, which Edward proposed to render annual, excited the jealousy of Philip de Valois, King of France, who not only prohibited his subjects to attend the Round Table at Windsor, but proclaimed an opposite Round Table to be held by himself at Paris. In consequence of this interference, the festival of Edward lost some part of its celebrity, and was diminished in splendour and frequency of attendance. This induced King Edward to establish the memorable Order of the Garter. Twenty-six of the most noble knights of England and Gascony were admitted into this highly honourable association, the well known motto of which (*Honi soit qui mal y pense*) seems to apply to the misrepresentation which the French monarch might throw out respecting the order of the Garter, as he had already done concerning the festival of the Round Table. There was so much dignity, as well as such obvious policy, in selecting from the whole body of chivalry a select number of champions to form an especial fraternity under the immediate patronage of the sovereign, it held out such a powerful stimulus to courage and exertion to all whose eyes were fixed on so dignified a reward of ambition, that various orders were speedily formed in the different courts of Europe, each having its own peculiar bandages, emblems, and statutes. To enumerate these is the task of the herald, not of the historian, who is only called upon to notice their existence and character. The first effect of these institutions on the spirit of chivalry in general, was doubtless favourable, as holding forth to the knighthood a high and honourable prize of emulation. But when every court in Europe, however petty, had its own peculiar order and ceremonial, while the great potentates established several; these dignities became so common, as to throw into the shade the order of knights-bachelors, the parent and proper degree

of chivalry, in comparison to which the others were mere innovations. The last distinction introduced, when the spirit of chivalry was almost totally extinguished, was the degree of knight baronet.

The degree of baronet, or of hereditary knighthood, might have been, with greater propriety, termed an inferior rank of noblesse, than an order of chivalry. Nothing can be more alien from the original idea of chivalry, than that knighthood could be bestowed on an infant, who could not have deserved the honour or be capable of discharging its duties. But the way had been already opened for this anomaly, by the manner in which the orders of foreign knighthood had been conferred upon children and infants in nonage. Some of these honours were also held by right of blood; the Dauphin of France, for example, being held to be born a knight of the Holy Ghost, without creation, and men had already long lost sight of the proper use and purpose of knighthood, which was now regarded and valued only as an honorary distinction of rank, that imposed no duties, and required no qualifications, or period of preliminary noviciate. The creation of this new dignity, as is well known, was a device of James I. to fill those coffers which his folly and profusion had emptied, and although the pretext of a Nova Scotia, or of an Ulster settlement, was used as the apology for the creation of the order, yet it was perfectly understood, that the real value given was the payment of a certain sum of money. The cynical Osborne describes this practice of the sale of honours, which, in their origin, were designed as the reward and pledge of chivalrous merit, with satirical emphasis

“At this time the honour of knighthood, which antiquity reserved sacred, as the cheapest and readiest jewel to present virtue with, was promiscuously laid on any head belonging to the yeomandry (made addle through pride and a contempt of their ancestor's pedigree), that had but a court-friend, or money to purchase the favour of the meanest able to bring him into an outward roome, when the king, the fountaine of honour, came downe, and was uninterrupted by other businesse in which case, it was then usuall for him to grant a commission for the chamberlaine, or some other lord, to do it”

Having noticed the mode in which knighthood was conferred, and the various subdivisions of the order in general, it is proper to notice the mode in which a knight might be degraded from his rank. This forfeiture might take place from crimes either actually committed, or presumed by the law of arms. The list of crimes for which a knight was actually liable to degradation corresponded to his duties. As devotion, the honour due to ladies, valour, truth, and loyalty, were the proper attributes of chivalry,—so heresy, insults or oppression of females, cowardice, falsehood, or treason, caused his degradation. And heraldry, an art which might be said to bear the shield of chivalry, assigned to such degraded knights and their descendants peculiar bearings, called

in blazonry abatements, though it may be doubted if these were often worn or displayed.

The most common case of a knight's degradation, occurred in the appeal to the judgment of God by the single combat in the lists. In the appeal to this awful criterion, the combatants, whether personally concerned, or appearing as champions, were understood, in martial law, to take on themselves the full risk of all consequences. And, as the defendant, or his champion, in case of being overcome, was subjected to the punishment proper to the crime of which he was accused, so the appellant, if vanquished, was, whether a principal or substitute, condemned to the same doom to which his success would have exposed the accused. Whichever combatant was vanquished he was liable to the penalty of degradation; and, if he survived the combat, the disgrace to which he was subjected was worse than death. His spurs were cut off close to his heels, with a cook's cleaver; his arms were basted and reversed by the common hangman; his belt was cut to pieces, and his sword broken. Even his horse showed his disgrace, the animal's tail being cut off, close to the rump, and thrown on a dung-hill. The death-bell tolled, and the funeral service was said, for a knight thus degraded, as for one dead to knightly honour. And, if he fell in the appeal to the judgment of God, the same dishonour was done to his senseless corpse. If alive, he was only rescued from death to be confined in the cloister. Such, at least, were the strict rules of chivalry, though the courtesy of the victor, or the clemency of the prince, might remit them in favourable cases.

Knights might also be degraded without combat, when convicted of a heinous crime. In Stowe's *Chronicle*, we find the following minute account of the degradation of Sir Andrew Harclay, created Earl of Carlisle by Edward II., for his valiant defence of that town against the Scots, but afterwards accused of traitorous correspondence with Robert the Bruce, and tried before Sir Anthony Lucy.

"He was ledde to the barre as an earle worthily apparelled, with his sword girt about him, horsed, booted, and spurred, and unto whom Sir Anthony spake in this manner. Sir Andrewe (quoth he,) the King, for thy valiant service, hath done thee great honour, and made thee Earle of Carlile; since which tyme, thou, as a traytor to thy Lord the King, leddest his people, that shoulde have holpe him at the battell of Heighland, awaie by the county of Copland, and through the earledom of Lancaster, by which meanes, our Lorde the King was discomfitted there of the Scottes, through thy treason and falsenesse; whereas, if thou haddest come betimes, he hadde had the victorie: and this treason thou committedst for ye great summe of golde and silver that thou receivdest of James Dowglasse, a Scot, the King's enemy. Our Lord the King will, therefore, that the order of knighthood by the which thou receivdest all thine honour and worship uppon thy bodie, be brought to nought,



and thy state undone, that other knights, of lower degree, may after thee beware, and take example truely to serve.

"Then commanded he to hesne his spurres from his heeles. then to break his sword over his head, which the King had given him to keepe and defend his land therewith, when he made him Earle. After this, he let unclothe him of his furred tabard, and of his hooede, of his coate of armes, and also of his girdle. and when this was done, Sir Anthony sayde unto him, Andrewe (quoth he) now art thou no knight, but a knave, and, for thy treason, the King will that thou shalte be hanged and drawne, and thyne head smitten off from thy bodie, and burned before thee, and thy bodie quartered and thy head being smitten off, afterwarde to be set upon London bridge, and thy foure quarters shall be sent into foure good townes of England, that all other may beware by thee. And as Anthony Lucy hadde sayde, so was it done in all things, on the last daie of October"

III. We are arrived at the third point proposed in our arrangement, the causes, namely, of the decay and extinction of chivalry.

The spirit of chivalry sunk gradually under a combination of physical and moral causes, the first arising from the change gradually introduced into the art of war, and the last from the equally great alteration produced by time in the habits and modes of thinking in modern Europe. Chivalry began to dawn in the end of the tenth, and beginning of the eleventh century. It blazed forth with high vigour during the crusades, which indeed may be considered as exploits of national knight-errantry, or general wars, undertaken on the very same principles which actuated the conduct of individual knights adventurers. But its most brilliant period was during the wars between France and England, and it was unquestionably in those kingdoms that the habit of constant and honourable opposition, unembittered by rancour or personal hatred, gave the fairest opportunity for the exercise of the virtues required from him whom Chaucer terms "a very perfect gentle knight." Froissart frequently makes allusions to the generosity exercised by the French and English to their prisoners, and contrasts it with the dungeons to which captives taken in war were consigned both in Spain and Germany. Yet both these countries, and indeed every kingdom in Europe, partook of the spirit of chivalry in a greater or less degree, and even the Moors of Spain caught the emulation, and had their orders of knighthood as well as the Christians. But even during this splendid period, various causes were silently operating the future extinction of the flame, which blazed thus wide and brightly.

An important discovery, the invention of gunpowder, had taken place, and was beginning to be used in war, even when chivalry was in its highest glory. It is said Edward III. had field-pieces at the battle of Cressy (1346,) and the use of guns is mentioned even earlier. But the force of gunpowder was long known and used, ere it made any

material change in the art of war. The long-bow continued to be the favourite, and it would seem the more formidable missile weapon, for almost two centuries after guns had been used in war. Still every successive improvement was gradually rendering the invention of fire-arms more perfect, and their use more decisive of the fate of battle. In proportion as they came into general use, the suits of defensive armour began to be less generally worn. It was found, that these cumbrous defences, however efficient against lances, swords, and arrows, afforded no effectual protection against those more forcible missiles. The armour of the knight was gradually curtailed to a light head-piece, a cuirass, and the usual defences of men-at-arms. Complete harness was only worn by generals and persons of high rank, and that rather, it would seem, as a point of dignity than for real utility. The young nobility of France, especially, tired of the unwieldy steel coats in which their ancestors sheathed themselves, adopted the slender and light armour of the German Reiters, or mercenary cavalry. They also discontinued the use of the lance; in both cases, contrary to the injunctions of Henry IV and the opinion of Sully. At length, the arms of the cavalry were changed almost in every particular from those which were proper to chivalry, and as, in such cases, much depends upon outward show and circumstance, the light-armed cavalier, who did not carry the weapons, or practise the exercises of knighthood, laid aside at the same time, the habits and sentiments peculiar to the order.

Another change, of vital importance, arose from the institution of the bands of gens-d'armes, or men-at-arms in France, constituted, as we have observed, expressly as a sort of standing army, to supply the place of bannerets, bachelors, squires, and other militia of early times. It was in the year 1445, that Charles VII. selected from the numerous chivalry of France fifteen companies of men-at-arms, called Les Compagnies d'Ordonnance, which were to remain in perpetual pay and subordination, and to enable the sovereign to dispense with the services of the tumultuary forces of chivalry, which, arriving and departing from the host at pleasure, collecting their subsistence by oppressing the country, and engaging in frequent brawls with each other, rather weakened than aided the cause they professed to support. The regulated companies, which were substituted for these desultory feudal levies, were of a more permanent and manageable description. Each company contained a hundred men-at-arms, and each man-at-arms was to be what was termed a *lance garnie*, that is, a mounted spearman, with his proper attendants, being four archers and a varlet, called a *coustillier*. Thus, each company consisted of six hundred horse, and the fifteen bands amounted to fifteen thousand cavalry. The charge of national defence was thus transferred from the chivalry of France, whose bold and desperate valour was sometimes rendered useless by their independent wilfulness and want of discipline, to a body of regular

forces, whose officers (a captain, lieutenant, and an ensign in each company) held command, not in virtue of their knighthood or banner-right, but as bearing direct commissions from the crown, as in modern times. At first, indeed, these bands of regulated gens-d'armes were formed of the same materials as formerly, though acting under a new system. The officers were men of the highest rank; the archers, and even the varlets, were men of honourable birth. When the Emperor Maximilian proposed that the French gens-d'armes should attempt to storm Padua, supported by the German lance-knechts or infantry, he was informed by Bayard, that, if the French men-at-arms were employed, they must be supported by those of the Germans, and not by the lance-knechts, because, in the French companies of ordonnance, every soldier was a gentleman. But, in the reign of Charles IX., we find the change natural to such a new order of things, was in complete operation. The King was content to seek, as qualifications for his men-at-arms, personal bravery, strength, and address in the use of weapons, without respect to rank or birth; and, probably, in many instances, men of inferior birth were preferred to fill up the ranks of these regulated bands. Monluc informs us in his *Commentaries*, that he made his first campaign, as an archer, in the Maréchal de Foix's company of gens-d'armes, "a situation much esteemed in those days, when many nobles served in that capacity. At present the rank is greatly degenerated." The complaints of the old noblesse, says Mezerai, were not without reason. Mean carabineers, they said, valets and lacqueys, were recruited in companies, which were put on the same footing with the ancient corps of gens-d'armes, whose officers were all barons of high rank, and almost every man-at-arms a gentleman by birth. These complaints, joined with the charge against Catherine of Medicis, that she had, by the creation of twenty-five new members of the order of Saint Michael, rendered its honours as common as the cockle-shells on the sea-shore, serve to show how early the first rude attempt at establishing a standing and professional army operated to the subversion of the ideas and privileges of chivalry. According to La Noue, it would seem that, in his time, the practice still prevailed of sending youths of good birth to serve as pages in the gens-d'armes; but, from the sort of society with whom they mixed in service of that sort, their natural spirit was rather debased, and rendered vulgar and brutal, than trained to honour and to gallantry.

A more fatal cause had, however, been for some time operating in England, as well as France, for the destruction of the system we are treating of. The wars of York and Lancaster in England, and those of the Huguenots and of the League, were of a nature so bitter and rancorous, as was utterly inconsistent with the courtesy, fair play, and gentleness, proper to chivalry. Where different nations are at strife together, their war may be carried on with a certain degree of

"During the foreign wars between France and Spain, especially in Piedmont," says La Noue, "we might often see a body of spears pass a village, where the peasants only interrupted their village dance to offer them refreshments; and, in a little after, a hostile troop receive, from the unoffending and unoffended inhabitants, the same courtesy. The two bodies would meet and fight gallantly, and the wounded of both parties would be transferred to the same village, lodged in the same places of accommodation, receive the same attention, and rest peaceably on each other's good faith till again able to take the field."

He contrasts this generosity with the miserable oppression of the civil wars, carried on by murdering, burning, and plundering friend and foe, armed and unarmed, alleging, all the while, the specious watchwords of God's honour, the King's service, the Catholic religion, the Gospel, our Country. In the end, he justly observes, "the soldiers become ravenous beasts, the country is rendered desert, wealth is wasted, the crimes of the great become a curse to themselves, and God is displeased." The bloody wars of the Rose in England, the execution of prisoners on each side, the fury and animosity which allowed no plea of mercy or courtesy, were scarce less destructive of the finer parts of the spirit of chivalry in England than those of the Huguenots in France.

The civil wars not only operated in debasing the spirit of chivalry, but in exhausting and destroying the particular class of society from which its votaries were drawn. To be of noble birth was not, indeed, absolutely essential to receiving the honour of knighthood, for men of low descent frequently attained it. But it required a distinguished display of personal merit to raise them out of the class where they were born, and the honours of chivalry were, generally speaking, appropriated to those of fair and gentle parentage. The noble families, therefore, were the source from which chivalry drew recruits; and it was upon the nobles that the losses, proscriptions, and forfeitures, of the civil wars chiefly fell. We have seen, that, in France, their poverty occasioned their yielding up the privilege of military command to the disposal of the crown. In England it was, fortunately, not so much the crown as the commons who rose on the ruins of feudal chivalry. But it is well known, that the civil wars had so exhausted the English nobility, as to enable Henry VII. to pass his celebrated statutes against those hosts of retainers, which struck, in fact, at the very root of their power. And, thus, Providence, whose ways bring good out of evil, laid the foundation of the future freedom of England in the destruction of what had long been its most constitutional ground of defence, and, in the subjugation of that system of chivalry, which, having softened the ferocity of a barbarous age, was now to fall into disuse, as too extravagant for an enlightened one.

In fact, it was not merely the changes which had taken place in the constitution of armies and fashion of the fight, nor the degraded and

weak state of the nobles, but also, and in a great degree, the more enlightened manners of the times, and the different channels into which enthusiasm and energy were directed, which gradually abolished the sentiments of chivalry. We have seen, that the abstract principles of chivalry were, in the highest degree, virtuous and noble, nay, that they failed by carrying to an absurd, exaggerated, and impracticable point, the honourable duties which they inculcated. Such doctrines, when they fail to excite enthusiasm, become exploded as ridiculous. Men's minds were now awakened to other and more important and complicated exercises of the understanding, and were no longer responsive to the subjects which so deeply interested their ancestors of the middle ages. Sciences of various kinds had been rekindled in the course of the sixteenth century; the arts had been awakened in a style of perfection unknown even to classical ages. Above all, religion had become the interesting study of thousands, and the innovating doctrines of the Reformers, while hailed with ecstasy by their followers, rejected as abominations by the Catholics, and debated fiercely by both parties, involved the nobility of Europe in speculations very different from the *arrêts* of the Court of Love, and demanded their active service in fields more bloody than those of tilt and tournament. When the historians or disputants on either side allude to the maxims of chivalry, it is in terms of censure and ridicule. Yet, if we judge by the most distinguished authorities on either side, the Reformers rejected as sinful what the Catholics were contented to brand as absurd. It is with no small advantage to the Huguenots,—to that distinguished party which produced Sully, D'Aubigné, Coligni, Duplessis-Mornay, and La Noue, that we contrast the moral severity with which they pass censure on the books of chivalry, with the licentious flippancy of Brantome, who ridicules the same works, on account of the very virtues which they inculcate. From the books of *Amadis de Gaul*, refining, as he informs us, upon the ancient vanities of Percforest, Tristan, Giron, &c., La Noue contends the age in which he lived derived the recommendation and practice of incontinence, of the poison of revenge, of neglect of sober and rational duty, desperate blood-thirstiness, under disguise of search after honour, and confusion of public order. "They are the instructions," he says, "of Apollyon, who, being a murderer from the beginning, delighteth wholly in promoting murder." Of the tournaments, he observes, "that such spectacles rendering habitual the sight of blows and blood, had made the court of France pitiless and cruel." "Let those," he exclaims, "who desire to feed their eyes with blood, imitate the manner of England, where they exercise their cruelty on brute beasts, bringing in bulls and bears to fight with dogs, a practice beyond comparison far more lawful than the justs of chivalry."\*

\* *Discourses, Political and Military*, translated out of the French of La Noue, 1587.

It is curious to contrast the opinions of La Noue, a stern and moral reformer, and a skilful and brave soldier as France ever produced, although condemning all war that did not spring out of absolute necessity, with those of Brantome, a licentious courtier, who mixed the Popish superstitions, which stood him instead of religion, with a leaven of infidelity and blasphemy. From the opinions he has expressed, and from what he has too faithfully handed down as the manners of his court and age, it is plain that all which was valuable in the spirit of chivalry had been long renounced by the French noblesse. To mark this declension, it is only necessary to run over the various requisites already pointed out as necessary to form the chivalrous character, and contrast them with the opinions held in the end of the sixteenth century, in the court of the descendants of Saint Louis.

The spirit of devotion which the rules of chivalry inculcated, was so openly disavowed, that it was assigned as a reason for preferring the character of Sir Tristram to that of Sir Lancelot, that the former is described in romance as relying, like Mezentius, upon his own arm alone, whereas Lancelot, on engaging in fight, never failed to commend himself to God and the saints, which, in the more modern opinions of the gallants of France, argued a want of confidence in his own strength and valour.

The devotion with which the ancient knights worshipped the fair sex, was held as old-fashioned and absurd as that which they paid to Heaven. The honour paid to chastity and purity in the German forests, and transferred as a sacred point of duty to the sons of chivalry, was as little to be found in the court of France, according to Brantome, as the chastity and purity to which it was due. The gross and coarse sensuality which we have seen engrafted upon professions of Platonic sentiment, became finally so predominant, as altogether to discard all marks of sentimental attachment; and from the time of Catherine of Medicis, who trained her maids of honour as courtezans, the manners of the court of France seem to have been inferior in decency to those of a well-regulated bagnio. The sort of respect which these ladies were deemed entitled to, may be conjectured from an anecdote given by Lord Herbert of Cherbury, whose own character was formed upon the chivalrous model which was now become obsolete. As he stood in the trenches before a besieged place, along with Balagny, a celebrated duellist of the period, between whom and Lord Herbert some altercation had formerly occurred, the Frenchman, in a bravade, jumped over the entrenchment, and, daring Herbert to follow him, ran towards the besieged place, in the face of a fire of grape and musketry. Finding that Herbert outran him, and seemed to have no intention of turning back, Balagny was forced to set the example of retreating. Lord Herbert then invited him to an encounter upon the old chivalrous point, which had the fairer and more virtuous mistress; to which proposition Balagny replied by a jest so coarse as made the Englishman retort, that he spoke like a mean debauchee, not like a

cavalier and man of honour. As Balagny was one of the most fashionable gallants of his time, and, as the story shows, ready for the most harebrained achievements, his declining combat upon the ground of quarrel chosen by Lord Herbert, is a proof how little the former love of chivalry accorded with the gallantry of these later days.

Bravery, the indispensable requisite of the *preux chevalier*, continued, indeed, to be held in the same estimation as formerly; and the history of the age gave the most brilliant as well as the most desperate examples of it, both in public war and private encounter. But courage was no longer tempered with the good faith and courtesy,—*La bonté des chevaliers antiques*, so celebrated by Ariosto. There no longer existed those generous knights, that one day bound the wounds of a generous enemy, guided him to a place of refuge, and defended him on the journey, and which on the next hesitated not to commit itself to the power of a mortal foe, without fear that he would break the faithful word he had pawned for the safety of his enemy. If such examples occur in the civil wars of France, they were dictated by the generosity of individuals who rose above the vices of their age, and were not demanded, as matters of right, from all who desired to stand well in public opinion. The intercourse with Italy, so fatal to France in many respects, failed not to imbue her nobility with the politics of Machiavel,—the coarse licentiousness of Aretin,—and the barbarous spirit of revenge, which held it wise to seek its gratification, not in fair encounter, but *per ogni modo*—in what manner soever it could be obtained. Duels, when they took place, were no longer fought in the lists, or in presence of judges of the field, but in lonely and sequestered places. Inequality of arms was not regarded, however great the superiority on one side. “Thou hast both a sword and dagger,” said Quelus to Antraguët, as they were about to fight, “and I have only a sword”—“The more thy folly,” was the answer, “to leave thy dagger at home. We came to fight, not to adjust weapons.” The duel accordingly went forward, and Quelus was slain, his left hand (in which he should have had his dagger) being shockingly cut in attempting to parry his antagonist’s blows without that weapon. The challenged person having a right to choose his weapons, often endeavoured to devise such as should give him a decidedly unfair advantage. Brantome records with applause the ingenuity of a little man, who, being challenged by a tall Gascon, made choice of a gorget so constructed, that his gigantic adversary could not stoop his neck, so as to aim his blows right. Another had two swords forged of a temper so extremely brittle, that, unless used with particular caution, and in a manner to which he daily exercised himself, the blade must necessarily fly in pieces. Both these ingenious persons killed their man with very little risk or trouble, and no less applause, it would seem, than if they had fought without fraud and covine. The seconds usually engaged, and when one of the combatants was slain, his antagonist did not hesi-

tate to assist his comrade in oppressing by odds him who remained. The *Little French Lawyer* of Fletcher turns entirely on this incident. By a yet more direct mode of murder, a man challenged to a duel was not always sure that his enemy was not to assassinate him by the assistance of ruffians at the place of rendezvous, of which Brantome gives several instances without much censure. The plighted word of an antagonist by no means ensured against treachery to the party to whom it was given. De Rosne, a gentleman well skilled in the practice and discipline of the wars, receiving a challenge from De Fargy, through the medium of a young man, who offered to pledge his word and faith for the fair conduct of his principal—made an answer which Brantome seems to approve as prudential. "I should be unwilling," he replied, "to trust my life upon a pledge on which I would not lend twenty crowns."

In many cases no ceremony was used, but the nobles assassinated each other without scruple or hesitation. Brantome gives several stories of the Baron des Vitaux, and terms his detestable murders brave and bold revenges.

But it would be endless to quote examples. It is enough to call to the reader's recollection the bloody secret of the massacre of St. Bartholomew, which was kept by such a number of the Catholic noblemen for two years, at the expense of false treaties, promises, and perjuries innumerable, and the execution which followed on naked, unarmed, and unsuspecting men, in which so many gallants lent their willing swords.

In England, the free tone of the government, and the advantage of equal laws, administered without respect of persons, checked similar enormities, which, however, do not appear to have been thought, in all cases, inconsistent with the point of honour, which, if not, as in France, totally depraved from the ancient practices of chivalry, might probably have soon become so. Sir John Ayres did not hesitate to attack Lord Herbert with the assistance of his servants; and the outrage upon the person of Sir John Coventry, which gave rise to the Coventry act against cutting and maiming, evinced the same spirit of degenerate and blood-thirsty revenge. Lord Sanquhar, having lost an eye in a trial of skill with a master of defence, conceived that his honour required that he should cause the poor man to be assassinated by ruffians in his own school. But as this base action met its just reward at the gallows, the spirit of Italian revenge was probably effectually checked by such a marked example. At the gallows, the unfortunate nobleman expressed his detestation for the crime, which he then saw in all its enormity. "Before his trial," he said, "the devil had so blinded his understanding, that he could not understand that he had done amiss, or otherwise than befitting a man of high rank and quality, having been trained up to the court, and living the life of a soldier;



which sort of men," he said, "stood more on a point of honour than religion." The feelings of chivalry must have been indeed degraded, when so base an assassination was accounted a point of honour. In Scotland, the manners of which country, as is well observed by Robertson, strongly resembled those of France, the number of foul murders, during the sixteenth century, was almost incredible; and indeed assassination might be termed the most general vice of the sixteenth century.

From these circumstances, the total decay of chivalrous principle is sufficiently evident. As the progress of knowledge advanced, men learned to despise its fantastic refinements; the really enlightened, as belonging to a system inapplicable to the modern state of the world; the licentious, fierce, and subtle, as throwing the barriers of affected punctilio betwixt them and the safe, ready, and unceremonious gratification of their lust or their vengeance.

The system of chivalry had its peculiar advantages during the middle ages. Its duties were not, and indeed could not, always be performed in perfection, but they had a strong influence on public opinion; and we cannot doubt that its institutions, virtuous as they were in principle, and honourable and generous in their ends, must have done much good and prevented much evil. We can now only look back on it as a beautiful and fantastic piece of frostwork which has dissolved in the beams of the sun! But though we seek in vain for the pillars, the vaults, the cornices, and the fretted ornaments of the transitory fabric, we cannot but be sensible that its dissolution has left on the soil valuable tokens of its former existence. We do not mean, nor is it necessary to trace, the slight shades of chivalry, which are yet received in the law of England. An appeal to combat in a case of treason, was adjudged, in the celebrated case of Ramsay and Lord Reay, in the time of Charles I. An appeal of murder seems to have been admitted as legal, within the last year.\* But it is not in such issues, rare as they must be, that we ought to trace the consequences of chivalry. We have already shown, that its effects are rather to be sought in the general feeling of respect to the female sex; in the rules of forbearance and decorum in society; in the duties of speaking truth and observing courtesy; and in the general conviction and assurance, that, as no man can encroach upon the property of another without accounting to the laws, so none can infringe on his personal honour, be the difference of rank what it may, without subjecting himself to personal responsibility. It will be readily believed that, in noticing the existence of duelling as a relic of chivalry, we do not mean to discuss the propriety of the custom. It is our happiness that the excesses to which this spirit is liable, are checked by the laws which wisely discountenance the practice; for, although the severity of the laws sometimes gives way to the force of public opinion,

\* 1817. See "Manual of Dates": "Trial by Battle"

they still remain an effectual restraint, in every case where the circumstances argue either wanton provocation or unfair advantage. It is to be hoped, that as the custom of appealing to this Gothic mode of settling disputes is gradually falling into disuse, our successors may enjoy the benefit of the general urbanity, decency, and courtesy, which it has introduced into the manners of Europe, without the necessity of having recourse to a remedy, not easily reconciled to law or to Christianity.

## ESSAY ON ROMANCE.

DR. JOHNSON has defined romance, in its primary sense, to be "a military fable of the middle ages; a tale of wild adventures in love and chivalry." But although this definition expresses correctly the ordinary idea of the word, it is not sufficiently comprehensive to answer our present purpose. A composition may be a legitimate romance, yet neither refer to love nor chivalry—to war nor to the middle ages. The "wild adventures" are almost the only absolutely essential ingredient in Johnson's definition. We would be rather inclined to describe a *Romance* as "a fictitious narrative in prose or verse; the interest of which turns upon marvellous and uncommon incidents," being thus opposed to the kindred term *Novel*, which Johnson has described as a "smooth tale, generally of love," but which we would rather define as "a fictitious narrative, differing from the romance, because the events are accommodated to the ordinary train of human events, and the modern state of society." Assuming these definitions, it is evident, from the nature of the distinction adopted, that there may exist compositions which it is difficult to assign precisely or exclusively to the one class or the other, and which, in fact, partake of the nature of both. But the distinction will be found broad enough to answer all general and useful purposes.

The word Romance, in its original meaning, was far from corresponding with the definition now assigned. On the contrary, it signified merely one or other of the popular dialects of Europe, founded (as almost all these dialects were) upon the Roman tongue, that is, upon the Latin. The name of Romance was indiscriminately given to the Italian, to the Spanish, even (in one remarkable instance at least)\* to the English language. But it was especially applied to the compound

\* This curious passage was detected by the industry of Ritson in *Geraldus Cambrensis*, "*Ab oquā illa optima, quæ Scottice vocata est FROTH Brittanice, WEIRD, Romane vero Scottie-Wattre*." Here the various names assigned to the Frith of Forth are given in the Gaelic or Earse, the British or Welsh and the phrase *Roman* is applied to the ordinary language of England. But it would be difficult to show another instance of the English language being termed Roman or Romance.

language of France ; in which the Gothic dialect of the Franks, the Celtic of the ancient Gauls, and the classical Latin, formed the ingredients. Thus Robert De Brunne :

" All in calde geste Inglis,  
That en this language spoken is—  
Frankis speech is caled *Romance*,  
So sayis clerkis and men of France "

At a period so early as 1150, it plainly appears that the Romance language was distinguished from the Latin, and that translations were made from the one into the other ; for an ancient Romance on the subject of Alexander, quoted by Fauchet, says it was written by a learned clerk,

' *Quid de Latin la trest et en Roman la mit* "

The most noted Romances of the middle ages were usually composed in the Romance or French language, which was in a peculiar degree the speech of love and chivalry, and those which are written in English always affect to refer to some French original, which, usually, at least, if not in all instances, must be supposed to have had a real existence. Hence the frequent recurrence of the phrase,

" As in romance we read ,"

Or,

" Right as the romaunt us tells "

and equivalent phrases, well known to all who have at any time perused such compositions. Thus, very naturally, though undoubtedly by slow degrees, the very name of *romaunt*, or *romance*, came to be transferred from the language itself to that peculiar style of composition in which it was so much employed, and which so commonly referred to it. How early a transference so natural took place, we have no exact means of knowing ; but the best authority assures us, that the word was used in its modern and secondary sense so early as the reign of Edward III. Chaucer, unable to sleep during the night, informs us, that, in order to pass the time,

" Upon my bed I sate upright,  
A ROMAUNCE, and he me it took  
To read and drive the night away "

The book described as a Romance contained, as we are informed,

" Fables  
That clerkis had, in old tyme,  
And other poets, put in rhyme "

And the author tells us, a little lower,

" This boke ne spake but of such thinge,  
Of Queens' lives and of Kings.

The volume proves to be no other than Ovid's *Metamorphoses* ; and

Chaucer, by applying to that work the name of Romance, sufficiently establishes that the word was, in his time, correctly employed under the modern acceptation.

Having thus accounted for the derivation of the word, our investigation divides itself into three principal branches, though of unequal extent. In the FIRST of these we propose to inquire into the general History and Origin of this peculiar species of composition, and particularly of Romances relating to European chivalry, which necessarily form the most interesting object of our inquiry, and in the SECOND, to give some brief account of the History of the romance of chivalry in the different states of Europe. THIRDLY, we propose to notice cursorily the various kinds of romantic composition by which the ancient romances of chivalry were followed and superseded, and with these notices to conclude the article.

I. In the views taken by Hurd, Percy, and other older authorities, of the origin and history of romantic fiction, their attentions were so exclusively fixed upon the romance of chivalry alone, that they seem to have forgotten that, however interesting and peculiar, it formed only one species of a very humorous and extensive genius. The progress of romance, in fact, keeps pace with that of society, which cannot long exist, even in the simplest state, without exhibiting some specimens of this attractive style of composition. It is not meant by this assertion that in early ages such narratives were invented, in the character of mere fictions, devised to pass away the leisure of those who have time enough to read and attend to them. On the contrary, romance and real history have the same common origin. It is the aim of the former to maintain as long as possible the mask of veracity; and indeed the traditional memorials of all earlier ages partake in such a varied and doubtful degree of the qualities essential to those opposite lines of composition, that they form a mixed class between them; and may be termed either romantic histories, or historical romances, according to the proportion in which their truth is debased by fiction, or their fiction mingled with truth.

A moment's glance at the origin of society will satisfy the reader why this can hardly be otherwise. The father of an isolated family, destined one day to rise from thence into a nation, may, indeed, narrate to his descendants the circumstances which detached him from the society of his brethren, and drove him to form a solitary settlement in the wilderness, with no other deviation from truth, on the part of the narrator, than arises from the infidelity of memory, or the exaggerations of vanity. But when the tale of the patriarch is related by his children, and again by his descendants of the third and fourth generation, the facts it contains are apt to assume a very different aspect. The vanity of the tribe augments the simple annals from one cause—

the love of the marvellous, so natural to the human mind, contributes its means of sophistication from another—while, sometimes, the king and the priest find their interest in casting a holy and sacred gloom and mystery over the early period in which their power arose. And thus altered and sophisticated from so many different motives, the real adventures of the founder of the tribe bear as little proportion to the legend recited among his children, as the famous hut of Loretto bears to the highly ornamented church with which superstition has surrounded and enchased it. Thus the definition which we have given of romance, as a fictitious narrative turning upon the marvellous or the supernatural, might, in a large sense, be said to embrace

Quicquid Græcia mendax  
Audet in historia,

or, in fine, the mythological and fabulous history of all early nations.

It is also important to remark, that poetry, or rather verse—rhythm at least of some sort or other, is originally selected as the best vehicle for these traditional histories. Its principal recommendation is probably the greater facility with which metrical narratives are retained in the memory—a point of the last consequence, until the art of writing is generally introduced: since the construction of the verse itself forms an artificial association with the sense, the one of which seldom fails to recall the other to recollection. But the medium of verse, at first adopted merely to aid the memory, becomes soon valuable on account of its other qualities. The march or measure of the stanza is gratifying to the ear, and, like a natural strain of melody, can be restrained or accelerated, so as to correspond with the tone of feeling which the words convey; while the recurrence of the necessary measure, rhythm, or rhyme, is perpetually gratifying the hearer by a sense of difficulty overcome. Verse being thus adopted as the vehicle of traditional history, there needs but the existence of a single man of genius, in order to carry the composition a step higher in the scale of literature than that of which we are treating. In proportion to the skill which he attains in his art, the fancy and ingenuity of the artist himself are excited; the simple narrative transmitted to him by ruder rhymers is increased in length; is decorated with the graces of language, amplified in detail, and rendered interesting by description; until the brief and barren original bears as little resemblance to the finished piece, as the *Iliad* of Homer to the evanescent traditions, out of which the blind bard wove his tale of Troy Divine. Hence the opinion expressed by the ingenious Percy, and assented to by Ritson himself. When about to present to his readers an excellent analysis of the old romance of *Lybius Disconius*, and making several remarks on the artificial management of the story, the Bishop observes, that, “if an Epic poem may be defined a fable related by a poet to excite admi-

ration and inspire virtue, by representing the action of some one hero favoured by Heaven, who executes a great design in spite of all the obstacles that oppose him, I know not why we should withhold the name of *Epic Poem* from the piece which I am about to analyze.\*

Yet although this levelling proposition has been laid down by Percy, and assented to by Ritson (writers who have few opinions in common,) and although, upon so general a view of the subject, the *Iliad*, or even the *Odyssey*, of Homer might be degraded into the class of romances, as *Le Beau Deconnu* is elevated into that of epic poems, there lies in ordinary speech, and in common sense, as wide a distinction between those two classes of composition, as there is betwixt the rude mystery or morality of the middle ages, and the regular drama by which these were succeeded. Where the art and the ornaments of the poet chiefly attract our attention—where each part of the narrative bears a due proportion to the others, and the whole draws gradually towards a final and satisfactory conclusion—where the characters are sketched with force, and sustained with precision—where the narrative is enlivened and adorned with so much, and no more, of poetical ornament and description, as may adorn, without impeding its progress—where this art and taste are displayed, supported, at the same time, by a sufficient tone of genius, and art of composition, the work produced must be termed an epic poem, and the author may claim his seat upon the high and honoured seat occupied by Homer, Virgil, and Milton. On the other hand, when a story languishes in tedious and minute details, and relies for the interest which it proposes to excite, rather upon the wild excursions of an unbridled fancy, than upon the skill of the poet—when the supernatural and the extraordinary are relied upon exclusively as the supports of the interest, the author, though his production may be distinguished by occasional flashes of genius, and though it may be interesting to the historian, as containing some minute fragments of real events, and still more so to the antiquary, from the light which it throws upon ancient manners, is still no more than a humble romancer, and his works must rank amongst those rude ornaments of a dark age, which are at present the subject of our consideration. Betwixt the extremes of the two classes of composition, there must, no doubt, exist many works, which partake in some degree of the character of both; and after having assigned most of them each to their proper class, according as they are distinguished by regularity of composition and poetical talent, or, on the contrary, by extravagance of imagination, and irregularity of detail, there may still remain some, in which these properties are so equally balanced, that it may be difficult to say to which class they belong. But although this may be the case in a very few instances, our taste and habits readily acknowledge as

\* *Reliques of Ancient English Poetry*, III xxvii The Prelate is citing a discourse on Epic Poetry, prefixed to *Telemachus*

complete and absolute a difference betwixt the Epopeia and Romance, as can exist between two distinct species of the same generic class.

We have said of Romance, that it first appears in the form of metrical history, professes to be a narrative of real facts, and is, indeed, nearly allied to such history as an early state of society affords ; which is always exaggerated by the prejudices and partialities of the tribe to which it belongs, as well as deeply marked by their idolatry and superstition. These it becomes the trade of the romancers still more to exaggerate, until the thread of truth can scarce be discerned in the web of fable which involves it ; and we are compelled to renounce all hope of deriving serious or authentic information from the materials upon which the compounders of fiction have been so long at work, from one generation to another, that they have at length obliterated the very shadow of reality or even probability.

The view we have given of the origin of Romance will be found to agree with the facts which the researches of so many active investigators of this curious subject have been able to ascertain. It is found, for example, and we will produce instances in viewing the progress of Romance in particular countries, that the earliest productions of this sort, known to exist, are short narrations or ballads, which were probably sung on solemn or festival occasions, recording the deeds and praises of some famed champion of the tribe and country, or perhaps the history of some remarkable victory or signal defeat, calculated to interest the audience by the associations which the song awakens. These poems, of which very few can now be supposed to exist, are not without flashes of genius, but brief, rude, and often obscure, from real antiquity or affected sublimity of diction. The song on the battle of Brunanburgh, preserved in the *Saxon Chronicle*, is a genuine and curious example of this aboriginal style of poetry.

Even at this early period,\* there may be observed a distinction betwixt what may be called the *Temporal* and *Spiritual* Romances ; the first destined to the celebration of worldly glory,—the second to recording the deaths of martyrs and the miracles of saints ; both which themes unquestionably met with an almost equally favourable reception from their hearers. But although most nations possess, in their early species of literature, specimens of both kinds of Romance, the proportion of each, as was naturally to have been expected, differs according as the genius of the people amongst whom they occur leaned towards devotion or military enterprise. Thus, of the Saxon specimens of poetry, which manuscripts still afford us, a very large proportion is devotional, amongst which are several examples of the spiritual Romance, but very few indeed of those respecting warfare or chivalry. On the other hand, the Norman language, though rich in examples of

\* The religious Romances of *Jehosaphat* and *Barlaam* were composed by John of Damascus in the eighth century.

both kinds of Romances, is particularly abundant in that which relates to battle and warlike adventure. The Christian Saxons had become comparatively pacific, while the Normans were certainly accounted the most martial people in Europe.

However different the spiritual Romance may be from the temporal in scope and tendency, the nature of the two compositions did not otherwise greatly differ. The structure of verse and style of composition was the same; and the induction, even when the most serious subject was undertaken, exactly resembled that with which minstrels introduced their idle tales, and often contained allusions to them. Warton quotes a poem on the Passions, which begins,

“ I hereth one lutele tale, that Ich eu wille telle,  
As wi wyndeth hit invrite in the godspelle,  
Nuz hit nouht of Charlemeyne ne of the Duzpere,  
Ac of Criste's thruurynge,” &c.

The Temporal Romances, on the other hand, often commenced by such invocations of the Deity, as would only have been in place when a much more solemn subject was to be agitated. The exordium of the Romance of *Ferumbras* may serve as an example of a custom almost universal :

“ God in glorie of mightis moost  
That all things made in sapience,  
By virtue of Word and Holy Gooste,  
Giving to men great excellence,” &c.

The distresses and dangers which the knight endured for the sake of obtaining earthly fame and his mistress's favour, the saint or martyr was exposed to for the purpose of securing his rank in heaven, and the favour of some beloved and peculiar patron saint. If the earthly champion is in peril from monsters, dragons, and enchantments, the spiritual hero is represented as liable to the constant assaults of the whole invisible world, headed by the ancient dragon himself. If the knight is succoured at need by some favouring fairy of protecting genius, the saint is under the protection not only of the whole heavenly host, but of some one divine patron or patroness who is his especial auxiliary. Lastly, the conclusion of the Romance, which usually assigns to the champion a fair realm, an abundant succession, and a train of happy years, consigns to the martyr his fane and altar upon earth, and in heaven his seat among saints and angels, and his share in a blessed eternity. It remains but to say, that the style and language of these two classes do not greatly differ, and that the composers of both employ the same structure of rhythm and of language, and draw their ideas and their incidents from similar sources; so that, having noticed the existence of the Spiritual Romance, it is unnecessary for the present to prosecute this subject farther.

Another early and natural division of these works of fiction seems to



have arranged them into *Serious* and *Comical*. The former were by far the most numerous, and examples of the latter are in most countries comparatively rare. Such a class, however, existed as proper Romances, even if we hold the comic Romance distinct from the *Contes* and *Fabliaux* of the French, and from such jocular English narratives as the *Wife Lapt in Mori's Skin*, *The Friar and the Boy*, and similar humorous tales of which the reader will find many examples in Ritson's *Ancient English Poetry*, and in other collections. The scene of these *gestes* being laid in low, or at least in ordinary life, they approach in their nature more nearly to the class of novels, and may, perhaps, be considered as the earliest specimens of that kind of composition. But the proper comic Romance was that in which the high terms and knightly adventures of chivalry were burlesqued, by ascribing them to clowns, or others of a low and mean degree. They formed, as it were, a parody on the serious Romance, to which they bore the same proportion as the anti-masque, studiously filled with grotesque, absurd, and extravagant characters, "entering," as the stage direction usually informs us, "to a confused music," bore to the masque itself, where all was dignified, noble, stately, and harmonious.

An excellent example of the comic Romance is the *Tournament of Tottenham*, printed in Percy's *Reliques*, in which a number of clowns are introduced practising one of those warlike games, which were the exclusive prerogative of the warlike and noble. They are represented making vows to the swan, the peacock, and the ladies, riding a tilt on their clumsy cart-horses, and encountering each other with ploughshares, and flails; while their defensive armour consisted of great wooden bowls and troughs, by way of helms and cuirasses. The learned editor seems to have thought this singular composition was, like Don Quixote, with which he compares it, a premeditated effort of satire, written to expose the grave and fantastic manners of the serious Romance. This is considering the matter too deeply, and ascribing to the author a more critical purpose than he was probably capable of conceiving. It is more natural to suppose that his only ambition was to raise a laugh, by ascribing to the vulgar the manners and exercises of the noble and valiant, as in the well-known farce of *High Life below Stairs*, the ridicule is not directed against the manners described, but against the menials who affect those that are only befitting their superiors.

The *Hunting of the Hare*, published in the collection formed by the late industrious and accurate Mr Weber, is a comic romance of the same order. A yeoman informs the inhabitants of a country hamlet that he has found a hare sitting, and invites them to come and course her. They attend, accordingly, with all the curs and mastiffs of the villages, and the unsportsmanlike manner in which the inexperienced

huntsmen and their irregular pack conduct themselves, forms the interest of the piece.

It can hardly be supposed that the satire is directed against the sport of hunting itself; since the whole ridicule arises out of the want of the necessary knowledge of its rules, incident to the ignorance and inexperience of the clowns, who undertook to practise an art peculiar to gentlemen.

The ancient poetry of Scotland furnishes several examples of this ludicrous style of romantic composition; as the *Tournament at the Drum*, and the *Fuisting of Watson and Barbour*, by Sir David Lindsay. It is probable that these mock encounters were sometimes acted in earnest; at least King James I. is accused of witnessing such practical jests; "sometimes presenting David Droman and Archie Armstrong, the king's fool, on the back of other fools, to tilt at one another till they fell together by the ears."—(Sir Anthony Weldon's *Court of King James*.)

In hastily noticing the various divisions of the Romance, we have in some degree delayed our promised account of its rise and progress; an inquiry which we mean chiefly to confine to the Romance of the middle ages. For although it be true that this species of composition is common to almost all nations, and that even if we deem the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* compositions too dignified by the strain of poetry in which they are composed to bear the name of Metrical Romances; yet we have the Pastoral Romance of *Daphnis and Chloe*, and the Historical Romance of *Theagenes and Chariclea*, which are sufficiently accurate specimens of that style of composition, to which it is probable the *Milesian Fables*, and the Romances of Antonius Diogenes, described by Photius, could they be recovered, would also be found to belong. It is impossible to avoid noticing that the Sybarites, whose luxurious habits seem to have been intellectual, as well as sensual, were peculiarly addicted to the perusal of the Milesian Fables; from which we may conclude that the narratives were not of that severe kind which inspired high thoughts and martial virtues. But there would be little advantage derived from extending our researches into the ages of classical antiquity respecting a class of compositions, which, though they existed then, as in almost every stage of society, were neither so numerous nor of such high repute as to constitute any considerable portion of that literature.

Want of space also may entitle us to dismiss the consideration of the Oriental Romances, unless in so far as in the course of the middle ages they came to furnish materials for enlarging and varying the character of the Romances of knight-errantry. That they existed early, and were highly esteemed both among the Persians and Arabians, has never been disputed; and the most interesting light has been lately thrown on the subject by the publication of *Antar*, one of the most ancient as

well as most rational, if we may use the phrase, of the oriental fictions. The Persian Romance of the *Shah-Nameh* is well known to Europeans by name, and by copious extracts ; and the love-tale of *Méjnoun and Leilah* is also familiar to our ears, if not to our recollections. Many of the fictions in the extraordinary collection of the *Arabian Tales*, approach strictly to the character of Romances of Chivalry ; although in general they must be allowed to exceed the more tame northern fictions in dauntless vivacity of invention, and in their more strong tendency to the marvellous. Several specimens of the comic Romance are also to be found mingled with those which are serious ; and we have the best and most positive authority that the recital of these seductive fictions is at this moment an amusement as fascinating and general among the people of the East, as the perusal of printed Romances and novels among the European public. But a minute investigation into this particular species of Romance would lead us from our present field, already sufficiently extensive for the limits to which our plan confines it.

The European Romance, wherever it arises, and in whatsoever country it begins to be cultivated, had its origin in some part of the real or fabulous history of that country ; and of this we will produce, in the sequel, abundant proofs. But the simple tale of tradition had not passed through many mouths, ere some one, to indulge his own propensity for the wonderful, or to secure by novelty the attention of his audience, augments the meagre chronicle with his own apocryphal inventions. Skirmishes are magnified into great battles ; the champion of a remote age is exaggerated into a sort of demi-god ; and the enemies whom he encountered and subdued are multiplied in number, and magnified in strength, in order to add dignity to his successes against them. Chanted to rhythmical numbers, the songs which celebrate the early valour of the fathers of the tribe become its war-cry in battle, and men march to conflict hymning the praises and the deeds of some real or supposed precursor who had marshalled their fathers in the path of victory. No reader can have forgotten that, when the decisive battle of Hastings commenced, a Norman minstrel, Taillefer, advanced on horseback before the invading host, and gave the signal for onset, by singing the *Song of Roland*, that renowned nephew of Charlemagne, of whom Romance speaks so much, and history so little ; and whose fall, with the chivalry of Charles the Great in the pass of Roncesvalles, has given rise to such clouds of romantic fiction, that its very name has been for ever associated with it. The remarkable passage has been often quoted from the *Brut of Wace*, an Anglo-Norman metrical chronicle.

" Taillefer, qui moult bien chantona  
Sur un cheval gi tost alont,  
Devant le Duc alont chantant

De Karlemaigne et de Rollant,  
Et d'Oliver et des vassals,  
Qui morurent en Rencevals."

Which may be thus rendered :

"Taillefer, who sung both well and loud,  
Came mounted on a courser proud ;  
Before the Duke the minstrel sprung,  
And loud of Charles and Roland sung,  
Of Oliver and champions mo,  
Who died at fatal Roncevaux."

This champion possessed the sleight-of-hand of the juggler, as well as the art of the minstrel. He tossed up his sword in the air, and caught it again as he galloped to the charge, and showed other feats of dexterity. Taillefer slew two Saxon warriors of distinction, and was himself killed by a third. Ritson, with less than his usual severe accuracy, supposed that Taillefer sung some part of a long metrical Romance upon Roland and his history ; but the words *chanson*, *cantilena* and *song*, by which the composition is usually described, seems rather to apply to a brief ballad or national song ; which is also more consonant with our ideas of the time and place where it was chanted.

But neither with these romantic and metrical chronicles did the mind long remain satisfied. More details were demanded, and were liberally added by the invention of those who undertook to cater for the public taste in such matters. The same names of kings and champions, which had first caught the national ear, were still retained, in order to secure attention ; and the same assertions of authenticity, and affected references to real history, were stoutly made, both in the commencement and in the course of the narrative. Each nation, as will presently be seen, came to adopt to itself a cycle of heroes like those of the *Iliad* ; a sort of common property to all minstrels who chose to make use of them, under the condition always that the general character ascribed to each individual hero was preserved with some degree of consistency. Thus, in the Romances of *The Round Table*, Gawain is usually represented as courteous ; Kay as rude and boastful ; Mordred as treacherous, and Sir Launcelot as a true, though a sinful lover, and in all other respects a model of chivalry. Amid the Paladins of Charlemagne, whose cycle may be considered as peculiarly the property of French in opposition to Norman-Anglo Romance, Gan, or Ganelon of Mayence, is as uniformly represented faithless, engaged in intrigues for the destruction of Christianity ; Roland as brave, unsuspicious, devotedly loyal, and somewhat simple in his disposition ; Renaud, or Rinaldo, is painted with all the properties of a borderer, valiant, alert, ingenious, rapacious, and unscrupulous. The same conventional distinctions may be traced in the history of the Nibelung, a composition of Scandinavian origin, which has supplied matter for so

many Teutonic adventurers. Meisteir Hildebrand, Etzel, Theodorick, and the champion Hogan, as well as Crimhelda and the females introduced, have the same individuality of character which is ascribed, in Homer's immortal writings, to the wise Ulysses, the brave but relentless Achilles, his more gentle friend Patroclus, Sarpedon the favourite of the Gods, and Hector the protector of mankind. It was not permitted to the invention of a Greek poet to make Ajax a dwarf, or Teucer a giant, Thersites a hero, or Diomedes a coward ; and it seems to have been under similar restrictions respecting consistency, that the ancient romancers exercised their ingenuity upon the materials supplied them by their predecessors. But, in other respects, the whole store of romantic history and tradition was free to all as a joint stock in trade, on which each had a right to draw as suited his particular purposes. He was at liberty, not only to select a hero out of known and established names which had been the theme of others, but to imagine a new personage of his own pure fancy, and combine him with the heroes of Arthur's table or Charlemagne's Court, in the way which best suited his fancy. He was permitted to excite new wars against those bulwarks of Christendom, invade them with fresh and innumerable hosts of Saracens, reduce them to the last extremity, drive them from their thrones, and lead them into captivity, and again to relieve their persons, and restore their sovereignty, by events and agents totally unknown in their former story.

In the characters thus assigned to the individual personages of romantic fiction, it is possible there might be some slight foundation in remote tradition, as there were also probably some real grounds for the existence of such persons, and perhaps for a very few of the leading circumstances attributed to them. But these realities only exist as the few grains of wheat in the bushel of chaff, incapable of being winnowed out, or cleared from the mass of fiction with which each new romancer had in his turn overwhelmed them. So that Romance, though certainly deriving its first original from the pure font of History, is supplied, during the course of a very few generations, with so many tributes from the imagination, that at length the very name comes to be used to distinguish works of pure fiction.

When so popular a department of poetry has attained this decided character, it becomes time to inquire who were the composers of these numerous, lengthened, and once admired narratives which are called Metrical Romances, and from whence they drew their authority. Both these subjects of discussion have been the source of great controversy among antiquaries ; a class of men who, be it said with their forgiveness, are apt to be both positive and polemical upon the very points which are least susceptible of proof, and which are least valuable if the truth could be ascertained ; and which, therefore, we would gladly have seen handled with more diffidence, and better temper, in proportion to their uncertainty.

The late venerable Dr. Percy, Bishop of Dromore, led the way unwarily to this dire controversy, by ascribing the composition of our ancient heroic songs and metrical legends, in rather too liberal language, to the minstrels, that class of men by whom they were generally recited. This excellent person, to whose memory the lovers of our ancient lyre must always remain so deeply indebted, did not, on publishing his work nearly fifty years ago, see the rigid necessity of observing the utmost and most accurate precision either in his transcripts or his definitions. The study which he wished to introduce was a new one—it was his object to place it before the public in an engaging and interesting form; and, in consideration of his having obtained this important point, we ought to make every allowance, not only for slight inaccuracies, but for some hasty conclusions, and even exaggerations, with which he was induced to garnish his labour of love. He defined the minstrels, to whose labours he chiefly ascribed the metrical compositions on which he desired to fix the attention of the public, as “an order of men in the middle ages, who subsisted by the arts of poetry and music, and sung to the harp verses composed by themselves or others.”\* In a very learned and elegant essay upon the text thus announced, the reverend Prelate in a great measure supported the definition which he had laid down; although it may be thought that, in the first editions at least, he has been anxious to view the profession of the minstrels on their fairest and most brilliant side; and to assign to them a higher station in society than a general review of all the passages connected with them will permit us to give to a class of persons, who either lived a vagrant life, dependent on the precarious taste of the public for a hard-earned maintenance, or, at best, were retained as a part of the menial retinue of some haughty baron, and in a great measure identified with his musical band.

The late acute, industrious, and ingenious Mr. Joseph Ritson, whose severe accuracy was connected with an unhappy eagerness and irritability of temper, took advantage of the exaggerations occasionally to be found in the Bishop's *Account of Ancient Minstrelsy*, and assailed him with terms which are anything but courteous. Without finding an excuse, either in the novelty of the studies in which Percy had led the way, or in the vivacity of imagination which he did not himself share, he proceeded to arraign each trivial inaccuracy as a gross fraud, and every deduction which he considered to be erroneous as a wilful untruth, fit to be stigmatised with the broadest appellation by which falsehood can be distinguished. Yet there is so little room for this extreme loss of temper, that upon a recent perusal of both these ingenious essays, we were surprised to find that the reverend editor of the

\* *Essay on Ancient Minstrels in England*, prefixed to the first volume of Bishop Percy's *Reliques*.

*Reliques*, and the accurate antiquary, have differed so very little, as, in essential facts, they appear to have done. Quotations are, indeed, made by both with no sparing hand; and hot arguments, and, on one side at least, hard words, are unsparingly employed; while, as is said to happen in theological polemics, the contest grows warmer, in proportion as the ground concerning which it is carried on is narrower and more insignificant. In reality do not essentially differ.

Ritson is chiefly offended at the sweeping conclusion, in which Percy states the minstrels as subsisting by the arts of poetry and music, and reciting to the harp verses composed by themselves and others. He shows very successfully that this definition is considerably too extensive, and that the term minstrel comprehended, of old, not merely those who recited to the harp or other instrument romances and ballads, but others who were distinguished by their skill in instrumental music only, and, moreover, that jugglers, sleight-of-hand performers, dancers, tumblers, and such like subordinate artists, who were introduced to help away the tedious hours in an ancient feudal castle, were also comprehended under the general term of minstrel. But although he distinctly proves that Percy's definition applied only to one class of the persons termed minstrels, those namely who sung or recited verses, and in many cases of their own composition; the bishop's position remains unassailable, in so far as relates to one general class, and those the most distinguished during the middle ages. All minstrels did not use the harp, and recite or compose romantic poetry; but it cannot be denied that such was the occupation of the most eminent of the order. This Ritson has rather admitted than denied; and the number of quotations which his industry has brought together, rendered such an admission inevitable.

Indeed, the slightest acquaintance with ancient romances of the metrical class, shows us that they were composed for the express purpose of being recited, or, more properly chanted, to some simple tune or cadence for the amusement of a large audience. Our ancestors, as they were circumscribed in knowledge, were also more limited in conversation than their enlightened descendants; and it seems probable, that, in their public festivals, there was great advantage found in the presence of a minstrel, who should recite some popular composition on their favourite subjects of love and war, to prevent those pauses of discourse which sometimes fall heavily on a company, even of the present accomplished age, and to supply an agreeable train of ideas to those guests who had none of their own. It is, therefore, almost constantly insinuated, that the Romance was to be chanted or recited to a large and festive society, and in some part or other of the piece, generally at the opening, there is a request of attention on the part of the performer; and hence, the perpetual "Lythe and listen, lordings free," which in those, or equivalent words, forms the introduction to so many Romances.

As, for example, in the old poem of *Guy and Colbrand*, the minstrel speaks of his own occupation :

“When meat and drink is great plentye,  
Then lords and ladyes still will be,  
And sit and solace lythe.  
Then it is time for mee to speake,  
Of kern knights and kempes greate,  
Such carping for to kythe.”

Chaucer, also, in his *Ryme of Sir Thopas*, assigns to the minstrels of his hero's household the same duty of reciting romances of spiritual or secular heroes, for the good knight's pastime while arming himself for battle :

“Do cum,” he sayed, “my minestrales,  
And jestours for to tellen tales  
Anon in min arming,  
Of romaunces that ben reales,  
Of popes and of cardinales,  
And eke of love-longing ”

Not to multiply quotations, we will only add one of some importance, which must have escaped Ritson's researches; for his editorial integrity was such, as rendered him incapable of suppressing evidence on either side of the question. In the old Romance or legend of *True Thomas and the Queen of Elfland*, Thomas the Rhymer, himself a minstrel, is gifted by the Queen of the Faëry with the faculties of music and song. The answer of Thomas is not only conclusive as to the minstrel's custom of recitation, but shows that it was esteemed the highest branch of his profession, and superior as such to mere instrumental music :

“‘To harp and carp, Thomas, wheresoever ye gȝn,  
Thomas take the these with the’——  
‘Harping,’ he said, ‘ken I non,  
For tong is chefe of Mynstralse.”\*

We, therefore, arrive at the legitimate conclusion, that although under the general term minstrels, were comprehended many who probably entertained the public only with instrumental performances, with ribald tales, with jugglery, or farcical representations, yet one class amongst them, and that a numerous one, made poetical recitations their chief if not their exclusive occupation. The memory of these men was, in the general case, the depository of the pieces which they recited; and hence, although a number of their romances still survive, very many more have doubtless fallen into oblivion.

That the minstrels were also the authors of many of these poems, and that they altered and enlarged others, is a matter which can scarce be doubted, when it is proved that they were the ordinary reciters of them. It was as natural for a minstrel to become a poet or composer

\* Jamieson's *Popular Ballads*, vol. ii., p. 27.



of romances, as for a player to be a dramatic author, or a musician a composer of music. Whosoever among a class whose trade it was to recite poetry, felt the least degree of poetical enthusiasm in a profession so peculiarly calculated to inspire it, must, from that very impulse, have become an original author, or translator at least: thus giving novelty to his recitations, and acquiring additional profit and fame. Bishop Percy, therefore, states the case fairly in the following passage:—"It can hardly be expected, that we should be able to produce regular and unbroken annals of the minstrel art and its professors, or have sufficient information, whether every minstrel or bard composed himself, or only repeated the songs he chanted. Some probably did the one, and some the other; and it would have been wonderful indeed, if men, whose peculiar profession it was, and who devoted their time and talents to entertain their hearers with poetical compositions, were peculiarly deprived of all poetical genius themselves, and had been under a physical incapacity of composing those common popular rhymes, which were the usual subjects of their recitation."\* While, however, we acquiesce in the proposition, that the minstrels composed many, perhaps the greater part, of the metrical Romances which they sung, it is evident they were frequently assisted in the task by others, who, though not belonging to this profession, were prompted by leisure and inclination to enter upon the literary or poetical department as amateurs. These very often belonged to the clerical profession, amongst whom relaxation of discipline, abundance of spare time, and impatience of the routine of ceremonious duties, often led individuals into worse occupations than the listening to or composing metrical Romances. It was in vain that both the poems and the minstrels who recited them, were, by statute, debarred from entering the more rigid monasteries. Both found their way frequently to the refectory, and were made more welcome than brethren of their own profession; as we may learn from a memorable *Gest*, in which two poor travelling priests, who had been received into a monastery with acclamation, under the mistaken idea of their being minstrels, are turned out in disgrace, when it is discovered that they were indeed capable of furnishing spiritual instruction, but understood none of the entertaining arts with which the hospitality of their convent might have been repaid by itinerant bards.

Nay, besides a truant disposition to a forbidden task, many of the grave authors may have alleged in their own defence, that the connexion between history and Romance was not in their day entirely dissolved. Some eminent men exercised themselves in both kinds of composition;

\* *Essay on the Ancient Minstrels*, p. 30.—Another authority of ancient date, the *Chronicle* of Bertrand Guesclin, distinctly attributes the most renowned romances to the composition of the minstrels by whom they were sung. As the passage will be afterwards more fully quoted, we must here only say, that after enumerating Arthur, Lancelot, Godfrey, Roland, and other champions, he sums up his account of them as being the heroes

"De quoi cils minestriers font les nobles romans."

as, for example, Maitre Wace, a canon of Caen, in Normandy, who, besides the metrical chronicle of *La Brut*, containing the earliest history of England, and other historical legends, wrote, in 1155, the *Roman de Chevalier de Lyon*, probably the same translated under the title of *Ywain and Gawain*. Lambert li Cors, and Benoit de Saint-Maur, seem both to have been of the clerical order; and, perhaps, Chretien de Troyes, a most voluminous author of Romance, was of the same profession. Indeed, the extreme length of many Romances being much greater than any minstrel could undertake to sing at one or even many sittings, may induce us to refer them to men of a more sedentary occupation than those wandering poets. The religious Romances were, in all probability, the works of such churchmen as might wish to reconcile an agreeable occupation with their religious profession. All which circumstances must be received as exceptions from the general proposition, that the Romances in metre were the composition of the minstrels by whom they were recited or sung, though they must still leave Percy's proposition to a certain extent unimpeached.

To explain the history of Romance, it is necessary to digress a little farther concerning the condition of the minstrels by whom these compositions were often made, and, generally speaking, preserved and recited. And here it must be confessed, that the venerable prelate has, perhaps, suffered his love of antiquity, and his desire to ennoble the productions of the middle ages, a little to overcolour the importance and respectability of the minstrel tribe; although his opponent Ritson has, on the other hand, seized on all circumstances and inferences which could be adduced to prove the degradation of the minstrel character, without attending to the particulars by which these depreciating circumstances were qualified. In fact, neither of these excellent antiquaries has cast a general or philosophic glance on the necessary condition of a set of men, who were by profession the instruments of the pleasure of others during a period of society such as was presented in the middle ages.

In a very early period of civilization, ere the division of ranks had been generally adopted, and while each tribe may be yet considered as one great family, and the nation as a union of such independent tribes, the poetical art, so nearly allied to that of oratory or persuasion, is found to ascertain to its professors a very high rank. Poets are the historians and often the priests of the tribe. Their command of language, then in its infancy, excites not merely pleasure, but enthusiasm and admiration. When separated into a distinct class, as was the case with the Celtic Bards, and, perhaps, with the Skalds of Scandinavia, they rank high in the scale of society, and we not only find kings and nobles listening to them with admiration, but emulous of their art, and desirous to be enrolled among their numbers. Several of the most renowned northern kings and champions, valued themselves

as much upon their powers of poetry as on their martial exploits; and of the Welsh princes, the Irish kings, and the Highland chiefs of Scotland, very many practised the arts of poetry and music. Llywarch Hen was a prince of the Cymraig,—Brian Boromhe, a harper and a musician,—and, without resorting to the questionable authenticity of Ossian, several instances of the same kind might be produced in the Highlands.

But, in process of time, when the classes of society come to assume their usual gradation with respect to each other, the rank of professional poets is uniformly found to sink gradually in the scale, along with that of all others whose trade it is to contribute to mere amusement. The mere professional poet, like the player or the musician, becomes the companion and soother only of idle and convivial hours; his presence would be unbecoming on occasions of gravity and importance; and his art is accounted at best an amusing but useless luxury. Although the intellectual pleasure derived from poetry, or from the exhibition of the drama, be of a different and much higher class than that derived from the accordance of sounds, or from the exhibition of feats of dexterity, still it will be found, that the opinions and often the laws of society, while individuals of these classes are cherished and held in the highest estimation, has degraded the professions themselves among its idle, dissolute, and useless appendages. Although it may be accounted ungrateful in mankind thus to reward the instruments of their highest enjoyments, yet some justification is usually to be drawn from the manners of the classes who were thus lowered in public opinion. It must be remembered that, as professors of this joyous science, as it was called, the minstrels stood in direct opposition to the more severe part of the Catholics, and to the monks in particular, whose vows bound them to practise virtues of the ascetic order, and to look upon everything as profane which was connected with mere worldly pleasure. The manners of the minstrels themselves gave but too much room for clerical censure. They were the usual assistants at scenes, not merely of conviviality, but of license; and, as the companions and encouragers of revelling and excess, they became contemptible in the eyes, not only of the aged and the serious, but of the libertine himself, when his debauch palled on his recollection. The minstrels, no doubt, like their brethren of the stage, sought an apology in the corrupted taste and manners of their audience, with which they were obliged to comply, under the true, but melancholy condition, that

“They who live to please must please to live.”

But this very necessity, rendered more degrading by their increasing numbers and decreasing reputation, only accelerated the total downfall of their order, and the general discredit and neglect into which they had fallen. The statute of the 39th Queen Elizabeth, passed at the close of the sixteenth century, ranks those dishonoured sons of

song among rogues and vagabonds, and appoints them to be punished as such ; and the occupation, though a vestige of it was long retained in the habits of travelling ballad-singers and musicians, sunk into total neglect and contempt. Of this we shall have to speak hereafter ; our business being at present with those romances which, while still in the zenith of their reputation, were the means by which the minstrels, at least the better and higher class among them, recommended themselves to the favour of their noble patrons, and of the audiences whom they addressed.

It may be presumed that, although the class of minstrels, like all who merely depend upon gratifying the public, carried in their very occupation the evils which first infected, and finally altogether depraved, their reputation ; yet, in the earlier ages, their duties were more honourably estimated, and some attempts were made to introduce into their motley body the character of a regular establishment, subjected to discipline and subordination. Several individuals, both of France and England, bore the title of King of Minstrels, and were invested probably with some authority over the others. The Serjeant of Minstrels is also mentioned ; and Edward IV. seems to have attempted to form a Guild or exclusive Corporation of Minstrels. John of Gaunt, at an earlier period, established (between jest and earnest, perhaps) a Court Baron of Minstrels, to be held at Tilbury. There is no reason, however, to suppose that the influence of their establishments went far in restraining the license of a body of artists so unruly as well as numerous.

It is not, indeed, surprising that individuals, whose talents in the arts of music or of the stage rise to the highest order, should, in a special degree, attain the regard and affection of the powerful, acquire wealth, and rise to consideration ; for, in such professions, very high prizes are assigned to pre-eminent excellence ; while ordinary or inferior practisers of the same art may be said to draw in the lottery something more than a mere blank. Garrick, in his chariot, and whose company was courted for his wit and talent, was, after all, by profession, the same with the unfortunate stroller, whom the British laws condemn as a vagabond, and to whose dead body other countries refuse even the last rites of Christianity. In the same manner it is easy to suppose that, when, in compliance with the taste of their age, monarchs entertained their domestic minstrels,\* those persons might be admitted to the most flattering intimacy with their royal masters ; sleep within the royal chamber,† amass considerable fortunes, found hospitals,‡ and

\* Berdic (*Regis Joculator*), the jongleur or minstrel of William the Conqueror, had, as appears from the Doomesday record, three vills and five caracates of land in Gloucestershire without rent. Henry I. had a minstrel called Galfrid, who received an annuity from the Abbey of Hyde.

† A minstrel of Edward I., during that prince's expedition to the Holy Land, slept within his tent, and came to his assistance when an attempt was made to assassinate him.

‡ The Priory and Hospital of Saint Bartholomew, in London was founded in the reign of Henry I. by Royer, or Raher, a minstrel of that prince.

receive rewards singularly over-proportioned to the perquisites of the graver professions,\* and even practise, in company with their royal masters, the pleasing arts of poetry and music, which all are so desirous of attaining;† whilst, at the same time, those who ranked lower in the same profession were struggling with difficulty to gain a precarious subsistence, and incurring all the disgrace usually attached to a vagabond life and a dubious character. In the fine arts particularly excellence is demanded, and mere mediocrity is held contemptible; and, while the favour with which the former is loaded sometimes seems disproportioned to the utility of the art itself, nothing can exceed the scorn poured out on those who expose themselves by undertaking arts which they are unable to practise with success. Self-conceit, however, love of an idle life, and a variety of combined motives, never fail to recruit the lower orders of such idle professions with individuals, by whose performances, and often by their private characters, the art which they have rashly adopted can only be discredited, without any corresponding advantage to themselves. It is not, therefore, surprising that, while such distinguished examples of the contrary appeared amongst individuals, the whole body of minstrels, with the Romances which they composed and sung, should be reprobated by graver historians in such severe terms as often occur in the monkish chronicles of the day.

Respecting the style of their composition, Du Cange informs us that the minstrels sometimes devoted their strains to flatter the great, and sing the praises of those princes by whom they were protected; while he owns, at the same time, that they often recommended to their hearers the path of virtue and nobleness, and pointed out the pursuits by which the heroes of Romance had rendered themselves renowned in song.‡ He quotes from the romance of *Bertrand Guesclin*, the injunc-

\* In 1441, the monks of Maxlock, near Coventry, paid a donation of four shillings to the minstrels of Lord Clinton for songs, harping, and other exhibitions, while, to a doctor who preached before the community in the same year, they assigned only sixpence.

† The noted anecdote of Blondel and his royal master, Richard Cœur de Lion, will occur to every reader.

‡ MINISTELLI dicti præsertim Scurræ, mimi, joculatores, quos etiamnum vulgo *Menestriers* vel *Menestriers*, appellamus—Porro ejusmodi scurrarum erat Principes non suis duntaxat

aut suavi vocis inflectione, fidibusque decantabant, quo sic dominorum, cæterorumque qui his intererant ludicris, nobilium animos ad virtutem capessendam et summorum virorum imitationem accenderent: quod fuit olim apud Gallos Bardorum ministerium, ut auctor est Tacitus. Neque enim alios à *Ministellis*, veterum Gallorum *Bardos* fuisse pluribus probat Henricus Valesius ad 15. Ammian. —*Chronicon* Bertrandi Guesclini:

*Qui veut avoir renom des bons et des vaillans  
Il doit aler souvent à la pluie et au champ,  
Et estre en la bataille, ausy que fu Rollans,  
Les quatre fils Haïmon et Charlon li plus grans,  
Li Dus Lions de Bourges, et Guion de Connans,  
Perceval li Galois, Lancelot et Tristans,  
Alexandres, Artus, Godefroy li sachans,  
De quoy cilz Menestriers font les nobles Romans.*

tion on those who would rise to fame in arms to copy the valiant acts of the Paladins of Charles, and the Knights of the Round Table, narrated in Romances ; it cannot be denied that those high tales in which the virtues of generosity, bravery, devotion to his mistress, and zeal for the Catholic religion, were carried to the greatest height of romantic perfection in the character of the hero, united with the scenes passing around them, were of the utmost importance in affecting the character of the age. The fabulous knights of romance were so completely identified with those of real history, that graver historians quote the actions of the former in illustration of, and as a corollary to, the real events which they narrate.\* The virtues recommended in romance were, however, only of that overstrained and extravagant cast which consisted with the spirit of chivalry. Great bodily strength, and perfection in all martial exercises, was the universal accomplishment inalienable from the character of the hero, and which each romancer had it in his power to confer. It was also easily in the composer's power to devise dangers, and to free his hero from them by the exertion of valour equally extravagant. But it was more difficult to frame a story which should illustrate the manners as well as the feats of chivalry ; or to devise the means of evincing that devotion to duty, and that disinterested desire to sacrifice all to faith and honour ; that noble spirit of achievement which laboured for others more than itself—which form, perhaps, the fairest side of the system under which the noble youths of the middle ages were trained up. The sentiments of chivalry, as we have explained in our article on that subject, were founded on the most pure and honourable principles, but unfortunately carried into hyperbole and extravagance ; until their religion approached to fanaticism, valour to frenzy, their ideas of honour to absurdity, their spirit of enterprize to extravagance, and their respect for the female sex to a sort of idolatry. All those extravagant feelings, which really existed in the society of the middle ages, were magnified and exaggerated by the writers and reciters of Romance ; and these, given as resemblances of actual manners, became, in their turn, the glass by which the youth of the age dressed themselves ; while the spirit of Chivalry and Romance thus gradually threw light upon and enhanced each other.

The Romances, therefore, exhibited the same system of manners which existed in the nobles of the age. The character of a true son of chivalry was raised to such a pitch of ideal and impossible perfection, that those who emulated such renown were usually contented to stop far short of the mark. The most adventurous and unshaken valour, a mind capable of the highest flights of romantic generosity, a heart

\* Barbour, the Scottish historian, censures a Highland chief, when, in commending the prowess of Bruce in battle, he likened him to the Celtic hero Fin MacCoul, and says, he might in more mannerly fashion have compared him to Guadifer, a champion celebrated in the *Romance of Alexander*.

which was devoted to the will of some fair idol, on whom his deeds were to reflect glory, and whose love was to reward all his toils,—these were attributes which all aspired to exhibit who sought to rank high in the annals of chivalry; and such were the virtues which the minstrels celebrated. But, like the temper of a tamed lion, the fierce and dissolute spirit of the age often showed itself through the fair varnish of this artificial system of manners. The valour of the hero was often stained by acts of cruelty, or freaks of rash desperation; his courtesy and munificence became solemn foppery and wild profusion; his love to his lady often demanded and received a requital inconsistent with the honour of the object; and those who affected to found their attachment on the purest and most delicate metaphysical principles, carried on their actual intercourse with a license altogether inconsistent with their sublime pretensions. Such were the real manners of the middle ages, and we find them so depicted in these ancient legends.

So high was the national excitation in consequence of the romantic atmosphere in which they seemed to breathe, that the knights and squires of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries imitated the wildest and most extravagant emprises of the heroes of Romance; and, like them, took on themselves the most extraordinary adventures, to show their own gallantry, and do most honour to the ladies of their hearts. The females of rank, erected into a species of goddesses in public, and often degraded as much below their proper dignity in more private intercourse, equalled in their extravagances the youth of the other sex. A singular picture is given by Knyghton of the damsels-errant who attended upon the solemn festivals of chivalry, in quest, it may reasonably be supposed, of such adventures as are very likely to be met with by such females as think proper to seek them. "These tournaments are attended by many ladies of the first rank and greatest beauty, but not always of the most untainted reputation. These ladies are dressed in parti-coloured tunics, one-half of one colour, and the other half of another; their lirripipes, or tippets, are very short; their caps remarkably little, and wrapt about their heads with cords; their girdles and pouches are ornamented with gold and silver; and they wear short swords, called *daggers*, before them, a little below their navels; they are mounted on the finest horses, with the richest furniture. Thus equipped, they ride from place to place in quest of tournaments, by which they dissipate their fortunes, and sometimes ruin their reputation."—(Knyghton, quoted in Henry's *History*, vol. viii., p. 402.)

The minstrels, or those who aided them in the composition of the romances, which it was their profession to recite, roused to rivalry by the unceasing demand for their compositions, endeavoured emulously to render them more attractive by subjects of new and varied interest, or by marvellous incidents which their predecessors were strangers to. Much labour has been bestowed, somewhat unprofitably, in endeavour-

ing to ascertain the sources from which they drew the embellishments of their tales, when the hearers began to be tired of the unvaried recital of battle and tournament which had satisfied the simplicity of a former age. Percy has contended for the Northern *Sagas* as the unquestionable origin of the Romance of the middle ages; Warton conceived that the *Oriental fables* borrowed by those minstrels who visited Spain, or who in great numbers attended the crusades, gave the principal distinctive colouring to those remarkable compositions; and a later system, patronised by later authors, has derived them in a great measure from the *Fragments of Classical Superstition* which continued to be preserved after the fall of the Roman Empire. All those systems seem to be inaccurate, in so far as they have been adopted, exclusively of each other, and of the general proposition, That fables of a nature similar to the Romances of Chivalry, modified according to manners and the state of society, must necessarily be invented in every part of the world, for the same reason that grass grows upon the surface of the soil in every climate and every country. "In reality," says Mr. Southey, who has treated this subject with his usual ability, "mythological and romantic tales are current among all savages of whom we have any full account: for man has his intellectual as well as his bodily appetites, and these things are the food of his imagination and faith. They are found wherever there is language and discourse of reason, in other words, wherever there is man. And in similar stages of civilization, or states of society, the fictions of different people will bear a corresponding resemblance, notwithstanding the differences of time and scene."\*

To this it may be added, that the usual appearances and productions of nature offer to the fancy, in every part of the world, the same means of diversifying fictitious narrative by the introduction of prodigies. If in any Romance we encounter the description of an elephant, we may reasonably conclude that a phenomenon unknown in Europe, must have been borrowed from the East; but whoever has seen a serpent and a bird, may easily aggravate the terrors of the former by conferring on a fictitious monster the wings of the latter; and whoever has seen or heard of a wolf, or lion, and an eagle, may, by a similar exertion of invention, imagine a griffin or hippogriff. It is imputing great poverty to the human imagination, to suppose that the *speciosa miracula*, which are found to exist in different parts of the world, must necessarily be derived from some common source; and perhaps we should not err more grossly in supposing, that the various kinds of boats, skiffs, and rafts, upon which men have dared the ocean on so many various shores, have been all originally derived from the vessel of the Argonauts.

On the other hand, there are various romantic incidents and inventions of a nature so peculiar that we may boldly, and at once, refer

\* Preface to Southey's edition of the *Morte D'Arthur*, vol. ii., Lond. 1817.



them to some particular and special origin. The tale of *Flora and Blanchefleur*, for example, could only be invented in the East, where the scene is laid, and the manners of which are observed with some accuracy. That of *Orfeo and Herodiis*, on the contrary, is the classical history of Orpheus and Eurydice, with the Gothic machinery of the Elves or Fairies, substituted for the infernal regions. But notwithstanding these and many other instances, in which the subjects or leading incidents of Romance can be distinctly traced to British or Armoric traditions, to the tales and history of Classic Antiquity, to the wild fables and rich imagery of Arabia, or to those darker and sterner themes which were first treated of by the Skalds of the North, it would be assuming greatly too much upon such grounds, to ascribe the derivation of romantic fiction, exclusively to any one of these sources. In fact, the foundation of these fables lies deep in human nature, and the superstructures have been imitated from various authorities by those who, living by the pleasure which their lays of chivalry afforded to their audience, were especially anxious to recommend them by novelty of every kind; and were undoubtedly highly gratified when the report of travellers, or pilgrims, or perhaps their own intercourse with minstrels of other nations, enabled them to vary their usual narrations with circumstances yet unheard in bower and hall. Romance, therefore, was like a compound metal, derived from various mines, and in the different specimens of which one metal or other was alternately predominant; and, viewed in this light, the ingenious theories of those learned antiquaries, who have endeavoured to seek the origin of this style of fiction in one of these sources alone, to the exclusion of all others, seem as vain as that of travellers affecting to trace the proper head of the Nile to various different springs, all of which are allowed to be accessory to form the full majesty of his current.

As the fashion of all things passes away, the Metrical Romances began gradually to decline in public estimation, probably on account of the depreciated character of the minstrels by whom they were recited. Tradition, says Ritson, is an alchymy, which converts gold into lead; and there is little doubt, that, in passing from mouth to mouth, and from age to age, the most approved Metrical Romances became gradually corrupted by the defect of memory of some reciters, and the interpolations of others; since few comparatively can be supposed to have had recourse to the manuscripts in which some have been preserved. Neither were the reciters in the latter, as in the former times, supplied with new productions of interest and merit. The composition of the Metrical Romance was gradually abandoned to persons of an inferior class. The art of stringing together in loose verse a number of unconnected adventures, was too easy not to be practised by many who only succeeded to such a degree as was discreditable to the art, by showing that mere mediocrity was sufficient to exercise it. And the

licentious character, as well as those who, under the various names of glee-men, minstrels, and the like, traversed the country, and subsisted by this idle trade, brought themselves and their occupation into still greater contempt and disregard. With them, the long recitations, formerly made at the tables of the great, were gradually banished into more vulgar society.

But though the form of these narratives underwent a change of fashion, the appetite for the fictions themselves continued as ardent as ever; and the Prose Romances which succeeded, and finally superseded those composed in verse, had a large and permanent share of popularity. This was, no doubt, in a great degree owing to the important invention of printing, which has so much contributed to alter the destinies of the world. The Metrical Romances, though in some instances sent to the press, were not very fit to be published in this form. The dull amplifications, which passed well enough in the course of a half-heard recitation, became intolerable when subjected to the eye; and the public taste gradually growing more fastidious as the language became more copious, and the system of manners more complicated, graces of style and variety of sentiment were demanded instead of a naked and unadorned tale of wonders. The authors of the Prose Romance endeavoured, to the best of their skill, to satisfy this newly-awakened and more refined taste. They used, indeed, the same sources of romantic history which had been resorted to by their metrical predecessors; and Arthur, Charlemagne, and all their chivalry, were as much celebrated in prose as ever they had been in poetic narrative. But the new candidates for public favour pretended to have recourse to sources of authentic information, to which their metrical predecessors had no access. They refer almost always to Latin and sometimes to Greek originals, which certainly had no existence; and there is little doubt that the venerable names of the alleged authors are invented, as well as the supposed originals from which they are said to have translated their narratives. The following account of the discovery of *La tres elegante delieux mellifue et tres plaisante Hystoire du tres noble Roy Perceforest* (printed at Paris in 1528 by Galliot du Pré,) may serve to show that modern authors were not the first who invented the popular mode of introducing their works to the world as the contents of a newly-discovered manuscript. In the abridgement to which we are limited, we can give but a faint picture of the minuteness with which the author announces his pretended discovery, and which forms an admirable example of the lie with a circumstance. In the year 1286, Count William of Hainault had, it is averred, crossed the seas in order to be present at the nuptials of Edward, and in the course of a tour through Britain, was hospitably entertained at an abbey situated on the banks of the Humber, and termed, it seems, Burtimer, because founded by a certain Burtimericus, a monarch of whom our annals are

silent, but who had gained, in that place, a victory over the heathens of Germany. Here a cabinet, which was enclosed in a private recess, had been lately discovered within the massive walls of an ancient tower, and was found to contain a Grecian manuscript, along with a royal crown. The abbot had sent the latter to King Edward, and the Count of Hainault with difficulty obtained possession of the manuscript. He had it rendered from Greek into Latin by a monk of the abbey of Saint Landelain, and from that language it is said to have been translated into French by the author, who gives it to the world in honour of the Blessed Virgin, and for the edification of nobleness and chivalry.

By such details, the authors of the Prose Romances endeavoured to obtain for their works a credit for authenticity which had been denied to the rhythmical legends. But in this particular they did great injustice to their contemned predecessors, whose reputations they murdered in order to rob them with impunity. Whatever fragments or shadowings of true history may yet remain hidden under the mass of accumulated fable, which had been heaped on them during successive ages, must undoubtedly be sought in the Metrical Romances, and, according to the view of the subject which we have already given, the more the works approach in point of antiquity to the period where the story is laid, the more are we likely to find those historical traditions in something approaching to an authentic state. But those who wrote under the imaginary names of Rusticien de Puise, Robert de Borron, and the like, usually seized upon the subject of some old minstrel, and, recomposing the whole narrative after their own fashion, with additional characters and adventures, totally obliterated in that operation any shades which remained of the first, and probably authentic, tradition, which was the original source of the elaborate fiction. Amplification was especially employed by the prose Romancers, who, having once got hold of a subject, seem never to have parted with it until their power of invention was completely exhausted. The Metrical Romances, in some instances, indeed, ran to great length, but were much exceeded in that particular by the folios which were written on the same or similar topics by their prose successors. Probably the latter judiciously reflected, that a book which addresses itself only to the eyes, may be laid aside when it becomes tiresome to the reader, whereas it may not always have been so easy to stop the minstrel in the full career of his metrical declamation.

Who, then, the reader may be disposed to inquire, can have been the real authors of those prolix works, who, shrouding themselves under borrowed names, derive no renown from their labours, if successful, and who, certainly, in the infant state of the press, were not rewarded with any emolument? This question cannot, perhaps, be very satisfactorily answered; but we may reasonably suspect that the long hours of leisure which the cloister permitted to its votaries, were

often passed away in this manner ; and the conjecture is rendered more probable, when it is observed that matters are introduced into those works which have an especial connexion with sacred history, and with the traditions of the Church. Thus, in the curious Romance of *Huon de Bourdeaux*, a sort of second part is added to that delightful history, in which the hero visits the terrestrial paradise, encounters the first murderer Cain, in the performance of his penance, with more matter to the same purpose, not likely to occur to the imagination of a layman ; besides that the laity of the period were, in general, too busy and too ignorant to engage in literary tasks of any kind. The mystical portion of the Romance of the *Round Table* seems derived from the same source. It may also be mentioned, that the audacious and sometimes blasphemous assertions, which claimed for these fictions the credit due even to the inspired writings themselves, were likely to originate amongst Roman Catholic churchmen, who were but too familiar with such forgeries for the purpose of authenticating the legends of their superstition. One almost incredible instance of this impious species of imposture occurs in the history of the *Saint Graal*, which curious mixture of mysticism and Chivalry is ascribed by the unfearing and unblushing writer to the Second Person of the Trinity.

Churchmen, however, were by no means the only authors of these legends, although the *Sires Clercs*, as they were sometimes termed, who were accounted the *chroniclers* of the times in which they lived, were usually in orders ; and although it appears that it was upon them that the commands of the sovereigns whom they served often imposed the task of producing new Romances, under the usual disguise of ancient chronicles translated from the learned languages, or otherwise collected from the ruins of antiquity. As education became improved, and knowledge began to be more generally diffused, individuals among the laity, and those of no mean rank, began to feel the necessity, as it may be called, of putting into a permanent form the "thick coming fancies" which gleam along the imagination of men of genius. Sir Thomas Malory, who compiled the *Morte d'Arthur* from French originals, was a person of honour and worship ; and Lord Berners, the excellent translator of Froissart, and author of a Romance called *The Chevalier de la Cygne*, is an illustrious example that a nobleman of high estimation did not think his time misemployed on this species of composition. Some literary fame must therefore have attended these efforts ; and perhaps less eminent authors might, in the later ages, receive some pecuniary advantages. The translator of *Perceforest*, formerly mentioned, who appears to have been an Englishman or Fleming, in his address to the warlike and invincible nobility of France, holds the language of a professional author, who expected some advantage besides that of pleasing those whom he addressed ; and who expresses proportional gratitude for the favourable reception of his

former feeble attempts to please them. It is possible, therefore, that the publishers, these lions of literature, had begun already to admit the authors into some share of their earnings. Other printers, like the venerable Caxton, compiled themselves, or translated from other languages, the Romances which they sent to the press ; thus uniting in their own persons the three separate departments of author, printer, and publisher.

The Prose Romances did not, in the general conduct of the story, where digressions are heaped on digressions, without the least respect to the principal narrative, greatly differ from that of their metrical predecessors, being to the full as tedious and inartificial ; nay, more so, in proportion as the new Romances were longer than the old. In the transference from verse to prose, and the amplification which the scenes underwent in the process, many strong, forcible, and energetic touches of the original author have been weakened, or altogether lost ; and the reader misses with regret some of the redeeming bursts of rude poetry which, in the Metrical Romance, makes amends for many hundred lines of bald and rude versification. But, on the other hand, the Prose Romances were written for a more advanced stage of society, and by authors whose language was much more copious, and who certainly belonged to a more educated class than the ancient minstrels. Men were no longer satisfied with hearing of hard battles and direful wounds, they demanded, at the hands of those who professed to entertain them, some insight into nature, or at least into manners, some description of external scenery, and a greater regard to probability, both in respect of the characters which are introduced, and the events which are narrated. These new demands the Prose Romances endeavoured to supply to the best of their power. There was some attention shown to relieve their story, by the introduction of new characters, and to illustrate these personages by characteristic dialogue. The lovers conversed with each other in the terms of metaphysical gallantry, which were used in real life ; and, from being a mere rhapsody of warlike feats, the Romance began to assume the nobler and more artificial form of a picture of manners. It is in the prose folios of *Lancelot du Lac*, *Perceforest*, and others, that antiquaries find recorded the most exact accounts of fights, tournaments, feasts, and other magnificent displays of chivalric splendour ; and as they descend into more minute description than the historians of the time thought worthy of their pains, they are a mine from which the painful student may extract much valuable information. This, however, is not the full extent of their merit. These ancient books, amid many pages of dull repetition and uninteresting dialect, and notwithstanding the languor of an inartificial, protracted, and confused story, exhibit from time to time passages of deep interest and situations of much novelty, as well as specimens of spirited and masculine writing. The general reader, who

dreads the labour of winnowing out these valuable passages from the sterile chaff through which they are scattered, will receive an excellent idea of the beauties and defects of the Romance from Tressau's *Corps d'Extraits de Romans de Chevalrie*, from Mr. Ellis's *Specimens of Early English Romances*, and from Mr. Dunlop's *History of Fiction*.

These works continued to furnish the amusement of the most polished courts in Europe so long as the manners and habits of Chivalry continued to animate them. Even the sagacious Catherine of Medicis considered the Romance of *Perceforest* as the work best qualified to form the manners and amuse the leisure of a young prince; since she impressed on Charles IX. the necessity of studying it with attention. But by degrees the progress of new opinions in religion, the promulgation of a stricter code of morality, together with the important and animating discussions which began to be carried on by means of the press, diverted the public attention from these antiquated legends. The Protestants of England, and the Huguenots of France, were rigorous in their censure of books of Chivalry, in proportion as they had been patronised formerly under the Catholic system: perhaps because they helped to arrest men's thoughts from more serious subjects of occupation. The learned Ascham thus inveighs against the Romance of *Morte d'Arthur*, and at the same time acquaints us with its having passed out of fashion:

"In our forefathers' tyme, when Papistrie, as a standyng poole, covered and overflowed all *Englande*, fewe bookes were read in our tongue, savyng certaine bookes of chivalrie, as they said for passtime and pleasure; which, as some say, were made in monasteries by idle monks, or wanton chanons. As, for example, *La Morte d'Arthur*, the whole pleasure of which booke standeth in two speciall poyntes, in open manslaughter, and bold bawdrye: in which booke they are counted the noblest knights that do kill most men without any quarrel, and commit fowlest adultries by subtilest shiftes: as Sir *Launcelote*, with the wife of King *Arthur* his master; Sir *Tristram*, with the wife of King *Marke* his uncle; Sir *Lamerocke*, with the wife of King *Lote*, that was his own aunt. This is goode stuffe for wise men to laughe at, or honest men to take pleasure at: yet I know, when God's Bible was banished the court, and *La Morte d'Arthur* received into the prince's chamber."<sup>\*</sup>

The brave and religious La Noue is not more favourable to the perusal of Romances than the learned Ascham; attributing to the public taste for these compositions the decay of morality among the French nobility.

"The ancient fables whose reliques doe yet remaine, namely, *Lancelot of the Lake*, *Perceforest*, *Tristram*, *Giron the Courteous*, and such others, doe beare witnesse of this olde vanitie; herewith were men fed

\* *Works of Roger Ascham*, p. 254. 4to. edition.

for the space of 500 yeeres, until our language growing more polished, and our mindes more ticklish, they were driven to invent some nouelties wherewith to delight us. Thus came y<sup>e</sup> bookes of *Amadis* into light among us in this last age. But to say y<sup>e</sup> truth, *Spaine* bred thē, and *France* new clothed thē in gay garments. In y<sup>e</sup> daies of *Henrie the Second* did they beare chieftest sway, and I think if any man would then have reprov'd thē, he should have bene spit at, because they were of themselves playfellowes and maintainers to a great sort of persons; whereof some, after they had learned to amize in speech, their teeth watered, so desirous were they even to taste of some small morsels of the delicacies therein most livelie and naturally represented.”\*

The gallant Maréchal proceeds at considerable length to refute the arguments of those who contended that these books were intended as a spur to the practice of arms and honourable exercises amongst youth, and labours hard to show that they teach dishonest practices both in love and in arms. It is impossible to suppress a smile when we find such an author as La Noue denouncing the introduction of spells, witchcrafts and enchantments into these volumes, not because such themes are absurd and nonsensical, but because the representing such beneficent enchanterers as Alquife and Urgunda, is, in fact, a vindication of those who traffic with the powers of darkness; and because those who love to read about sorceries and enchantments become, by degrees, familiarized with those devilish mysteries, and may at length be induced to have recourse to them in good earnest.

The Romances of Chivalry did not, however, sink into disrepute under the stern rebuke of religious puritans or severe moralists, but became gradually neglected as the customs of Chivalry itself fell into disregard; when of course the books which breathed its spirit, and were written under its influence, ceased to produce any impression on the public mind, and, superseded by better models of composition, and overwhelmed with the ridicule of Cervantes, sunk by degrees into utter contempt and oblivion.

Other works of amusement, of the same general class, succeeded the proper Romance of Chivalry. Of these we shall take some notice hereafter; since we must here close our general view of the history of Romance, and proceed briefly to give some account of those peculiar to the various European nations.

II. We can here but briefly touch upon a subject of great interest and curiosity, the peculiar character and tone, namely, which the Romance of Chivalry received from the manners and early history of the nations among whom it is found to exist; and the corresponding question, in what degree each appears to have borrowed from other

\* *The Politicks and Militaire Discourses* of the Lord de la Noue, pp. 87, 88. 4to., Lond. 1587

countries the themes of their own minstrels, or to have made use of materials common to the whole.

Scandinavia, as was to be expected, may be safely considered as the richest country in Europe in ancient tales corresponding with the character of Romance; sometimes composed entirely in poetry or rhythm, sometimes in prose, and much more frequently in a mixture of prose, narrative, and lyrical effusions. Their well-known Skalds, or bards, held a high rank in their courts and councils. The character of a good poet was scarce second to that of a gallant leader, and many of the most celebrated champions ambitiously endeavoured to unite both in their own persons. Their earlier sagas, or tales, approach to the credit of real history, and were unquestionably meant as such, though, as usual at an early period, debased by the intermixture of those *speciosa miracula*, which the love of the wonderful early introduces into the annals of an infant country. There are, however, very many of the sagas, indeed by far the greater number of those now known to exist, which must be considered as falling rather under the class of fictitious than of real narratives; and which, therefore, belong to our present subject of inquiry. The *Omeyinger Saga*, the *Heimskringla*, the *Saga* of Olaf Triggwason, the *Eyrbyggja Saga*, and several others, may be considered as historical: whilst the numerous narratives referring to the history of the Nibelungen and Volsungen are as imaginary as the Romances which treat of King Arthur and of Charlemagne. These singular compositions, short, abrupt, and concise in expression, full of bold and even extravagant metaphor, exhibiting many passages of forceful and rapid description, hold a character of their own; and while they remind us of the indomitable courage and patient endurance of the hardy Scandinavians, at once the honour and the terror of Europe, rise far above the tedious and creeping style which characterised the minstrel efforts of their successors, whether in France or England. In the pine forests, also, and the frozen mountains of the North, there were nursed, amid the relics of expiring Paganism, many traditions of a character more wild and terrible than the fables of classical superstition; and these the gloomy imagination of the Skalds failed not to transfer to their romantic tales. The late spirit of inquiry, which has been so widely spread through Germany, has already begun to throw much light on this neglected storehouse of romantic lore, which is worthy of much more attention than has yet been bestowed upon it in Britain. It must, however, be remarked, that although the north possesses champions and Romances of its own, unknown to southern song, yet in a later age, the inhabitants of these countries borrowed from the French minstrels some of their most popular subjects; and hence we find sagas on the subjects of Sir Tristrem, Sir Percival, Sir Ywaine and others, the well-known themes of French and English Romance. These, however, must necessarily be considered later in date as well as



far inferior in interest, to the sagas of genuine northern birth. Mr. Ritson has indeed quoted their existence as depreciating the pretensions of the northern nations to the possession of poems of high antiquity of their own native growth. Had he been acquainted with the *Norman-Kièmpé Datur*, a large folio, printed at Stockholm in 1737, he would have been satisfied, that out of the numerous collection of legends respecting the achievements of Gothic champions, far the greater part are of genuine Norse origin; and although having many features in common with the Romances of southern chivalry, they are, in the other marked particulars, distinctly divided from that class of fictitious composition.

The country of Germany, lying contiguous to France, and constantly engaged in friendly and hostile intercourse with that great seat of romantic fiction, became, of course, an early partaker in the stores which it afforded. The Minnesingers of the Holy Empire were a race no less cherished than the troubadours of Provence, or the minstrels of Normandy, and no less active in availing themselves of their indigenuous traditions, or importing those of other countries, in order to add to their stock of romantic fiction. Godfied of Strasburgh composed many thousand lines upon the popular subject of Sir Tristrem, and others have been equally copious, both as translators and as original authors, upon various subjects connected with French Romance, but Germany possessed materials, partly borrowed from Scandinavia, partly peculiar to her own traditional history, as well as to that of the Roman empire, which they applied to the construction of a cycle of heroes as famous in Teutonic song as those of Arthur and Charlemagne in France and in Britain.

As in all other cases of the kind, a real conqueror, the fame of whose exploits survived in tradition, was adopted as the central object, around whom were to be assembled a set of champions, and with whose history was to be interwoven the various feats of courage which they performed, and the adventures which they underwent. Theodorick, King of the Goths, called in these romantic legends, Diderick of Bern (i. e. Verona) was selected for this purpose by the German Minnesingers. Amongst the principal personages introduced are Ezzel, King of the Huns, who is no other than the celebrated Attila; and Gunter, King of Burgundy, who is identified with a Guntachar of history, who really held that kingdom. The good knight Wolfram de Eschenbach seems to have been the first who assembled the scattered traditions and minstrel tales concerning these sovereigns into one large volume of German verse, entitled *Helden-Buch*, or the Book of Heroes. In this the author has availed himself of the unlimited license of a romancer; and has connected with the history of Diderick and his chivalry a number of detached legends, which had certainly a separate and independent existence. Such is the tale of *Sigard the Horny*, which has the ap-

pearance of having originally been a Norse Saga. An analysis of this singular piece was published by Mr Weber, in a work entitled *Illustrations of Northern Antiquities, from the earlier Teutonic and Scandinavian Romances*; and the subject has been fully illustrated by the publications of the learned Von der Hagen in Germany, and those of the Honourable William Herbert.

It is here only necessary to say, that Theodorick, like Charlemagne and Arthur, is considered in the Romance as a monarch more celebrated for the valorous achievements of the brotherhood of chivalry whom he has drawn around him than for his own, though neither deficient in strength nor courage. His principal followers have each their discriminatory and peculiar attributes. Meister Hildebrand, the Nestor of the band, is, like the Maugis of Charlemagne's heroes, a magician as well as a champion. Hogan, or Hagan, begot betwixt a mortal and a sea-goblin, is the fierce Achilles of the confederation. It is the uniform custom of the romancers to conclude by a general and overwhelming catastrophe, which destroys the whole ring of chivalry whose feats they had commemorated. The ruin which Roncesvalles brought to the Paladins of Charlemagne, and the fatal battle of Camlann to the Knights of the Round Table, fell upon the warriors of Diderick through the revengeful treachery of Crimhilda, the wife of Ezzel; who, in revenge for the death of her first husband, and in her inordinate desire to possess the treasures of the Nifunga or Burgundians, brought destruction on all those celebrated champions. Mr. Weber observes, that these German fictions differ from the Romances of French Chivalry, in the greater ferocity and less refinement of sentiment ascribed to the heroes, and also in their employing to a great extent the machinery of the Duergar, or Dwarfs, a subterranean people to whom the *Helden Buch* ascribes much strength and subtilty, as well as profound skill in the magic art, and who seem, to a certain extent, the predecessors of the European fairy.

Italy, so long the seat of classical learning, and where that learning was first revived, seems never to have strongly embraced the taste for the Gothic Romance. They received, indeed, the forms and institutions of chivalry, but the Italians seem to have been in a considerable degree strangers to its spirit, and not to have become deeply enamoured of its literature. There is an old Romance of Chivalry proper to Italy, called *Guerino the Wretched*, but we doubt if even this be of indigenous growth. Indeed, when they did adopt from the French the fashionable tales of Charlemagne and his Paladins, they did not attract the attention of the classical Italians, until Boiardo, Berni, Pulci, and, above all, the divine Ariosto, condescended to use them as the basis of their well known romantic poems, and thus the fictitious narratives originally composed in metre, and after re-written in prose, were anew decorated with the honours of verse. The roman-

tic poets of Italy did not even disdain to imitate the rambling, diffuse, and episodal style proper to the old Romance; and Ariosto, in particular, although he torments the reader's attention by digressing from one adventure to another, delights us, upon frequent perusals, by the extreme ingenuity with which he gathers up the broken ends of his narrative, and finally weaves them all handsomely together in the same piece. But the merits and faults of romantic poetry form themselves the fruitful subject of a long essay. We here only notice the origin of those celebrated works, as a species of composition arising out of the old Romance, though surpassing it in regularity, as well as in all the beauties of style and diction.

With Spain the idea of Romance was particularly connected; and the associations which are formed upon perusing the immortal work of Cervantes, induce us for a long time to believe that the country of Don Quixote must be the very cradle of romantic fiction. Yet, if we speak of priority of date, Spain was among the last nations of Europe with whom Romance became popular. It was not indeed possible that, among a people speaking so noble and poetical a language, engaged in constant wars, which called forth at once their courage and their genius, there should not exist many historical and romantic ballads descriptive of their rencounters with the Moors. But their native poets seem to have been too much engaged with the events of their own age, or of that which had just preceded them, to permit of their seeking subjects in the regions of pure fiction; and we have not heard of a Spanish Metrical Romance, unless the poems describing the adventures of the Cid should be supposed to have any affinity to that class of composition. The Peninsula, however, though late in adopting the prevailing taste for romantic fiction, gave origin to one particular class, which was at least as popular as any which had preceded it. *Amadis de Gaul*, the production, it would seem, of Vasco de Lobeira, a Portuguese knight, who lived in the fourteenth century, gave a new turn to the tales of chivalry; and threw into the shade the French Prose Romances, which, until the appearance of this distinguished work, had been the most popular in Europe.

The author of *Amadis*, in order, perhaps, to facilitate the other changes which he introduced, and to avoid rushing against preconceived ideas of events or character, laid aside the worn-out features of Arthur and Charlemagne, and imagined to himself a new dynasty both of sovereigns and of heroes, to whom he ascribed a style of manners much more refined, and sentiments much more artificial, than had occurred to the authors of *Perceval* or *Perceforest*. Lobeira had also taste enough to perceive, that some unity of design would be a great improvement on the old Romance, where one adventure is strung to another with little connexion from the beginning to the end of the volume; which thus concludes, not because the plot was winded up;

but because the author's invention, or the printer's patience, was exhausted. In the work of the Portuguese author, on the contrary, he proposes a certain end, to advance or retard which all the incidents of the work have direct reference. This is the marriage of Amadis with Oriana, against which a thousand difficulties are raised by rivals, giants, sorcerers, and all the race of evil powers unfavourable to chivalry; whilst these obstacles are removed by the valour of the hero, and constancy of the heroine, succoured on their part by those friendly sages, and blameless sorceresses, whose intervention gave so much alarm to the tender-conscienced De la Noue. Lobeira also displayed considerable attention to the pleasure which arises from the contrast of character; and to relieve that of Amadis, who is the very essence of chivalrous constancy, he has introduced Don Galaor, his brother, a gay libertine in love, whose adventures form a contrast with those of his more serious relative. Above all, the *Amadis* displays an attention to the style and conversation of the piece, which, although its effects are now exaggerated and ridiculous, was doubtless at the time considered as the pitch of elegance; and here were, for the first time, introduced those hyperbolical compliments, and that inflated and complicated structure of language, the sense of which walks as in a masquerade.

The *Amadis* at first consisted only of four books, and in that limited shape may be considered as a very well-conducted story; but additions were speedily made which extended the number to twenty-four; containing the history of Amadis subsequent to his obtaining possession of Oriana, and down to his death, as also of his numerous descendants. The theme was not yet exhausted; for, as the ancient romancers, when they commenced a new work, chose for their hero some newly-invented Paladin of Charlemagne, or knight of King Arthur, so did their new successors adopt a new descendant of the family of Amadis, whose genealogy was thus multiplied to a prodigious degree. For an account of *Esplandian*, *Florimond of Greece*, *Palmerin of England*, and the other Romances of this class, the reader must be referred to the valuable labours of Mr. Southey, who has abridged both *Amadis* and *Palmerin* with the most accurate attention to the style and manners of the original. The books of *Amadis* became so very popular as to supersede the elder Romances almost entirely, even at the court of France, where, according to La Noue, already quoted, they were introduced about the reign of Henry II. It was against the extravagance of these fictions, in character and in style, that the satire of Cervantes was chiefly directed; and almost all the library of Don Quixote belongs to this class of Romances, which, no doubt, his adventures contributed much to put out of fashion.

In every point of view, France must be considered as the country in which Chivalry and Romance flourished in the highest perfection; and

the originals of almost all the early Romances, whether in prose or verse, whether relating to the history of Arthur or of Charlemagne, are to be found in the French language ; and other countries possess only translations from thence. This will not be so surprising when it is recollected, that these earlier Romances were written, not only for the use of the French, but of the English themselves, amongst whom French was the prevailing language during the reigns of the Anglo-Norman monarchs. Indeed, it has been ingeniously supposed, and not without much apparent probability, that the fame of Arthur was taken by the French minstrels for the foundation of their stories in honour of the English kings, who reigned over the supposed dominions of that British hero ; while, on the other hand, the minstrels who repaired to the Court of France, celebrated the prowess of Charlemagne and his twelve peers as a subject more gratifying to those who sat upon his throne. It is, perhaps, some objection to this ingenious theory, that, as we have already seen, the battle of Hastings was opened by a minstrel, who sung the war-song of Roland, the nephew of Charlemagne ; so that the Norman Duke brought with him to England the tales that are supposed, at a much later date, to have been revived to soothe the national pride of the French minstrels.

How the French minstrels came originally by the traditional relics concerning Arthur and Merlin, on which they wrought so long and so largely, must, we fear, always remain uncertain. From the Saxons, we may conclude they had them not ; for the Saxons were the very enemies against whom Arthur employed his good sword Excalibar ; that is to say, if there was such a man, or such a weapon. We know, indeed, that the British, like all the branches of the Celtic race, were much attached to poetry and music, which the numerous relics of ancient poetry in Wales, Ireland, and the Highlands of Scotland, sufficiently evince. Arthur, a name famous among them, with some traditions concerning the sage Merlin, may have floated either in Armorica, or among the half-British of the borders of Scotland, and of Cumberland ; and, thus preserved, may have reached the ear of the Norman minstrels, either in their newly-conquered dominions, or through their neighbours of Brittany. A theme of this sort once discovered, and found acceptable to the popular ear, gave rise, of course, to a thousand imitations ; and gradually drew around it a cloud of fiction which, embellished by such poetry as the minstrels could produce, arranged itself by degrees into a system of fabulous history, as the congregated vapours, touched by the setting sun, assume the form of battlements and towers. We know that the history of Sir Tristrem, first versified by Thomas the Rhymer of Ercildoune, was derived from Welsh traditions, though told by a Saxon poet. In fact, it may be easily supposed, that the romancers of that early period were more eager to acquire popular subjects than delicately scrupulous of borrowing from their

neighbours ; and when the foundation-stone was once laid, each subsequent minstrel brought his contribution to the building. The idea of an association of knights assembled around one mighty sovereign, was so flattering to all the ruling princes of Europe, that almost all of them endeavoured to put themselves at the head of some similar institution. The historical foundation of this huge superstructure is almost imperceptible. Mr. Turner has shown that the evidence rather inclines to prove the actual existence of King Arthur ; and the names of Gawain, his nephew, and of Geneura, his faithful spouse, of Mordred, and Merlin, were preserved by Welsh tradition. To the same source may be referred the loves of Tristrem and Ysolde, which, although a separate story, has become, in the later Romances, amalgamated with that of Arthur. But there can be little doubt that all beyond the bare names of the heroes owes its existence to the imagination of the romancers.

It might be thought that the Romances referring to the feats of Charlemagne ought to contain more historical truth than those concerning Arthur ; since the former relate to a well-known monarch and conqueror, the latter to a personage of a very doubtful and shadowy existence. But the Romances concerning both are equally fabulous. Charles had, indeed, an officer named Roland, who was slain with other nobles in the field of Roncevalles, fighting, not against the Saracens or Spaniards, but against the Gascons. This is the only point upon which the real history of Charlemagne coincides with that invented for him by romancers. Roland was Prefect of Bretagne, and his memory was long preserved in the war-song which bore his name. A fabulous chronicler, calling himself Turpin, compiled, in or about the eleventh century, a romantic history of Charlemagne ; but it may be doubted whether, in some instances, he has not availed himself of the fictions already devised by the early romancers, while to those who succeeded them, his annals afforded matter for new figments. The personal character of Charlemagne has suffered considerably in the hands of the romantic authors, although they exaggerated his power and his victories. He is represented as fond of flattery, irritable in his temper, ungrateful for the services rendered him by his most worthy Paladins, and a perpetual dupe to the treacherous artifices of Count Gan, or Ganelon, of Mayence ; a renegade to whom the romancers impute the defeat at Roncevalles, and all the other misfortunes of the reign of Charles. This unfavourable view of the Prince, although it may bear some features of royalty, neither resembles the real character of the conqueror of the Saxons and Lombards, nor can be easily reconciled with the idea that he was introduced to flatter the personal vanity of the Princes of the Valois race, by a portrait of their great predecessor.

The circumstance, that Roland was a lieutenant of Brittany, and the certainty that Marie borrowed from that country the incidents out of

which she composed her lays, seems to fortify the theory that the French minstrels obtained from that country much of their most valuable materials ; and that, after all that has been said and supposed, the history of Arthur probably reached them through the same channel.

The Latin writers of the middle ages afforded the French romancers the themes of those metrical legends which they have composed on subjects of classical fame.

The honour of the prose Romances of Chivalry, exclusive always of the books of *Amadis*, belongs entirely to the French, and the curious volumes which are now the object of so much research amongst collectors, are almost universally printed at Paris.

England, so often conquered, yet fated to receive an accession of strength from each new subjugation, cannot boast much of ancient literature of any kind ; and, in the department of which we treat, was totally inferior to France. The Saxons had, no doubt, Romances (taking the word in its general acceptation ;) and Mr. Turner, to whose researches we are so much indebted, has given us the abridgement of one entitled *Caedmon*, in which the hero, whose adventures are told much after the manner of the ancient Norse Sagas, encounters, defeats, and finally slays an evil being called Grendel, who, except in his being subject to death, seems a creature of a supernatural description. But the literature of the Saxons was destroyed by the success of William the Conqueror, and the Norman knights and barons, among whom England was in a great measure divided, sought amusement, not in the lays of the vanquished, but in those composed in their own language. In this point of view, England, as a country, may lay claim to many of the French Romances, which were written, indeed, in that language, but for the benefit of the court and nobles of England, by whom French was still spoken. When the two languages began to assimilate together, and to form the mixed dialect termed the Anglo-Norman, we have good authority for saying that it was easily applied to the purpose of romantic fiction, and recited in the presence of the nobility.

Robert de la Brunne, who composed his *History of England* about this time, has this remarkable passage, which we give, along with the commentary of the Editor of *Sir Tristrem*, as it is peculiarly illustrative of the subject we are inquiring into.

Als thai haf wryten and sayd  
Haf I alle in myn Inglis layd,  
In simple speche as I couthe,  
That is lightest in manne's mouthe.  
I made noght for no disours,  
Ne for no seggours, no harpours,  
Bot for the luf of symple men,  
That strange Inglis cannot ken ;  
For many it ere that strange Inglis,  
In ryme wate never what it is ;

And bot thai wist what it mente,  
Ellis methought it were alle schente.  
I made it not for to be prayسد,  
Bot at the lewed men were aysed.  
If it were made in ryme couwee,  
Or in strangere, or enterlacé,  
That rede Inglis it ere inowe,  
That couthe not have coppled a kowe.  
That outhir in cowee or in baston,  
Sum suld haf ben fardon ;

So that fele men that it herde  
 Suld not witte howe that it ferde.  
*I see in song, in sedgelyng tale,  
 Of Erceldoune and of Kendale,  
 Non thaim sayis as thai thaim wroght,  
 And in their saying it semes noght,  
 That may thou here in Sir Tristrem,  
 Over gestes il has the steem,  
 Over all that is or was,  
 If men it sayd as made Thomas;  
 Bot I here it no man so say,  
 That of some cople som is away.*  
 So thare fayre saying here beforen,  
 Is thare travaille nere forlorne;  
 Thai sayd it for pride and nobleye,  
 That were not suylike as thei.  
 And alle that thai willed overwhere,  
 Alle that ilke will now forfare.

'Thai seyde it in so quaint Inglis,  
 That many wate not what it is.  
 Therefore heuyed wele the more  
 In strange ryme to travayle sore;  
 And my wit was oure thynne  
 So strange speche to travayle in;  
 And forsoth I couth noght  
 So strange Inglis as thai wroght,  
 And men besoght me many a tyme  
 To turne it bot in light ryme.  
 Thai seyde if I in strange ryme it turn,  
 To here it many on suld skorne;  
 For in it ere names full selcouthe,  
 That ere not used now in mouthe.  
 And therefore, for the commonalté,  
 That blythely wald listen to me,  
 On light lange I it began,  
 For luf of the lewed man.

"This passage requires some commentary, as the sense has been generally mistaken. Robert de Brunne does not mean, as has been supposed, that the minstrels who repeated Thomas's Romance of *Sir Tristrem*, disguised the meaning by putting it into '*quainte Inglis*;' but, on the contrary, that Kendal and Thomas of Erceldoune did themselves use such '*quainte Inglis*,' that those who repeated the story were unable to understand it, or to make it intelligible to their hearers. Above all, he complains, that by writing an intricate and complicated stanza, as '*ryme cowee, strangere*,' or '*entrelacé*,' it was difficult for the *diseurs* to recollect the poem; and of *Sir Tristrem*, in particular, he avers, that he never heard a perfect recital, because of some one '*copple*' or stanza, a part was always omitted. Hence he argues at length that he himself, writing not for the minstrel or harper, nor to acquire personal fame, but solely to instruct the ignorant in the history of their country, does well in choosing a simple structure of verse, which they can retain correctly on their memory, and a style which is popular and easily understood. Besides which, he hints at the ridicule he might draw on his poem, should he introduce the uncouth name of his personages into a courtly or refined strain of verse. They were

'Great names, but hard in verse to stand.'

While he arrogates praise to himself for his choice, he excuses Thomas of Erceldoune and Kendale for using a more ambitious and ornate kind of poetry. 'They wrote for pride (fame) and for nobles, not such as these my ignorant hearers.' \*\*

If the editor of *Sir Tristrem* be correct in his commentary, there existed in the time of Thomas de Brunne minstrels or poets who composed English poetry to be recited in the presence of the great, and who, for that purpose, used a singularly difficult stanza, which was very apt to

\* *Sir Tristrem*, Introduction, pp. 61-65, Edin. 1804.



be nutilated in recitation. *Sir Tristrem*, even as it now exists, shows likewise that considerable art was resorted to in constructing the stanza, and has, from beginning to end, a concise, quaint, abstract turn of expression, more like the Saxon poetry than the simple, bold, and diffuse details of the French minstrel. Besides *Sir Tristrem*, there remain, we conceive, two other examples of "gestes written in quaint Inglis," composed, namely, according to fixed and complicated rules of verse, and with much attention to the language, though the effect produced is far from pleasing. They are both of Scottish origin, which may be explained by recollecting that in the Saxon provinces of Scotland, as well as at the court, Norman was never generally used, and therefore it is probable that the English language was more cultivated in that country at an early period than in England itself, where, among the higher classes, it was for a long time superseded by that of the conquerors. These Romances, entitled *Sir Gawain*, and *Sir Gologras*, and *Sir Galeran of Galloway*, have all the appearance of being original compositions, and display considerable poetical effort. But the uncouth use of words dragged in for the sake of alliteration, and used in secondary and oblique meanings, renders them extremely harsh in construction, as well as obscure in meaning.

In England, it would seem that the difficulties pointed out by De la Brunne early threw out of fashion this ornate kind of composition, and the English minstrels had no readier resource than translating from the French, who supplied their language at the same time with the phrases of chivalry which did not exist in English. These compositions presented many facilities to the minstrel. He could, if possessed of the slightest invention, add to them at pleasure, and they might as easily be abridged, when memory failed or occasion required. Accordingly, translations from the French fill up the list of English Romance. They are generally written in short lines rhyming together; though often, by way of variety, the third and sixth lines are made to rhyme together, and the poem is thus divided into stanzas of three couplets each. In almost all of these legends reference is made to "the Romance," that is, some composition in the French language, as to the original authority. Nay, which is very singular, tales where the subjects appear to be of English growth, seem to have yet existed in France ere they were translated into the language of the country to which the heroes belonged. This seems to have been the case with *Hornchuld*, with *Guy of Warwick*, with *Bevis of Hampton*, all of which appear to belong originally to England; yet are their earliest histories found in the French language, or at least the vernacular versions refer to such for their authority. Even the Romance of *Richard*, England's own Cœur de Lion, has perpetual references to the French original from which it was translated. It must naturally be supposed that these translations were inferior to the originals; and whether it was owing to this cause, or that the com-

position of these rhymes was attended with too much facility, and so fell into the hands of very inferior composers, it is certain, and is proved by the highest authority, that of Chaucer himself, that even in his time these rhyming Romances had fallen into great contempt. The *Rime of Sir Thopas*, which that poet introduces as a parody, undoubtedly, of the rhythmical Romances of the age, is interrupted by mine host, Harry Bailly with the strongest and most energetic expressions of total and absolute contempt. But though the minstrels were censured by De la Brunne for lack of skill and memory, and the poems which they recited were branded as "drafty rhymings," by the far more formidable sentence of Chaucer, their acceptance with the public in general must have been favourable, since, besides many unpublished volumes, the two publications of Ritson and Weber bear evidence of their popularity. Some original compositions doubtless occur among so many translations, but they are not numerous, and few have been preserved. The poem of *Sir Eger and Sir Greme*, which seems of Scottish origin, has no French original; nor has it been discovered either of the *Squire of Low Degree*, *Sir Eglamour*, *Sir Pleindamour*, or some others. But the French derivation of the two last names renders it probable that such may exist.

The minstrels and their compositions seem to have fallen into utter contempt about the time of Henry VIII. There is a piteous picture of their condition in the person of Richard Sheale, which it is impossible to read without compassion, if we consider that he was the preserver at least, if not the author, of the celebrated heroic ballad of *Chevy Chase*, at which Sir Philip Sydney's heart was wont to beat as at the sound of a trumpet. This luckless minstrel had been robbed on Dunsmore Heath, and, shame to tell, he was unable to persuade the public that a son of the muses had ever been possessed of the twenty pounds which he averred he had lost on the occasion. The account he gives of the effect upon his spirits is melancholy, and yet ridiculous enough.

"After my robbery my memory was so decayed,  
That I colde neather syne nor talke, my wyttys were so dismayde.  
My audacitie was gone, and all my myrry tawk,  
Ther ys sum heare have sene me as myrry as a hawke,  
But nowe I am so trublyde wih phansis in my mynde,  
That I cannot play the myrry knave, according to my kynde.  
Yet to tak thought, I perseve, ys not the next waye  
To bring me out of det, my creditors to paye.  
I may well say that I hade but evil hape,  
For to lose about threscore pounds at a clape,  
The loss of my mony did not greve me so sore,  
But the talke of the pyple dyde greve me moch mor.  
Sum sayde I was not robde, I was but a lyeng knave.  
Yt was not possyble for a mynstrell so much mony to have:  
In dede, to say the truthe, that ys ryght well knowene,  
That I never had so moche mony of myne owene,  
But I had friendds in London, whos namys I can declare,  
That at all tymys wolde lende me cc. lds. worth of ware.

And sum agayn such frendship I founde,  
 That thei wold lend me in mony nyn or ten pownde.  
 The occasion why I cam in debt I shall make relacion,  
 My wyff in dede ys a sylk woman be her occupation,  
 And linnen cloths most cheffy was her greatyste trayd,  
 And at faris and merkytts she solde sale-warre that she made;  
 As shertts, smockys, partlytts, hede clothes, and othar thinggs,  
 As sylk thredd, and eggyns, skirrts, bandds, and strings."

From *The Chant* of Richard Sheale, *British Bibliographer*, No. xiii., p. 101.

Elsewhere, Sheale hints that he had trusted to his harp, and to the well-known poverty attached to those who used that instrument, to bear him safe through Dunsmore Heath. At length the order of English minstrels was formally put down by the act 39th of Queen Elizabeth, classing them with sturdy beggars and vagabonds; in which disgraceful fellowship they only existed in the capacity of fiddlers, who accompanied their instrument with their voice. Such a character is introduced in the play of *Monsieur Thomas*, as the "poor fiddler who says his songs."

The Metrical Romances which they recited also fell into disrepute, though some of the more popular, sadly abridged and adulterated, continued to be published in *chap books*, as they are called. About fifty or sixty years since, a person acquired the nickname of *Rosewal and Lilian* from singing that Romance about the streets of Edinburgh, which is probably the very last instance of the proper minstrel craft.

If the Metrical Romances of England can boast of few original compositions, they can show yet fewer examples of the Prose Romance. Sir Thomas Malory, indeed, compiled from various French authorities, his celebrated *Morte d'Arthur*, indisputably the best Prose Romance the language can boast. There is also *Arthur of Little Britain*; and the Lord Berners compiled the Romance of the *Knight of the Swan*. The books of *Amadis* were likewise translated into English; but it may be doubted whether the country in general ever took that deep interest in the perusal of these records of love and honour with which they were greeted in France. Their number was fewer; and the attention paid to them in a country where great political questions began to be agitated, was much less than when the feudal system still continued in its full vigour.

III. We should now say something on those various kinds of romantic fictions which succeeded to the Romance of Chivalry. But we can only notice briefly works which have long slumbered in oblivion, and which certainly are not worthy to have their slumbers disturbed.

Even in the time of Cervantes, the Pastoral Romance, founded upon the *Diana* of George of Monté Mayor, was prevailing to such an extent as made it worthy of his satire. It was, indeed, a system still more remote from common sense and reality than that of chivalry itself. For the maxims of chivalry, high-strained and absurd as they are, did actually influence living beings, and even the fate of kingdoms. If

*Amadis de Gaule* was a fiction, the Chevalier Bayard was a real person. But the existence of an Arcadia, a pastoral region in which a certain fantastic sort of personages, desperately in love, and thinking of nothing else but their mistresses, played upon pipes, and wrote sonnets from morning to night, yet were supposed all the while to be tending their flocks, was too monstrously absurd to be long tolerated.

A numerous, and once most popular, class of fictions, was that entitled the *Heroic Romance of the Seventeenth Century*.

If the ancient *Romance of Chivalry* has a right to be called the parent of those select and beautiful fictions, which the genius of the Italian poets has enriched with such peculiar charms, another of its direct descendants, *The Heroic Romance of the Seventeenth Century*, is with few exceptions the most dull and tedious species of composition that ever obtained temporary popularity. The old Romance of Heliodorus, entitled *Theagenes and Chariclea*, supplied, perhaps, the earliest model of this style of composition ; but it was from the Romances of Chivalry that it derives its most peculiar characteristics. A man of a fantastic imagination, Honoré d'Urfé, led the way in this style of composition. Being willing to record certain love intrigues of a complicated nature which had taken place in his own family, and amongst his friends, he imagined to himself a species of Arcadia on the banks of the Lignon, whose inhabitants lived for love and for love alone. There are two principal stories, said to represent the family history of D'Urfé and his brother, with about thirty episodes, in which the gallantries and intrigues of Henry IV.'s court are presented under borrowed names. Considered by itself, this is but an example of the Pastoral Romance ; but it was so popular, that three celebrated French authors, Gomberville, Calprenède, and Madam Scuderi, seized the pen, and composed in emulation many interminable folios of Heroic Romance. In these insipid performances, a conventional character, and a set of family manners and features, are ascribed to the heroes and heroines, although selected from distant ages and various quarters of the world. The heroines are, without exception, models of beauty and perfection ; and so well persuaded of it themselves, that to approach them with the most humble declaration of love was a crime sufficient to deserve the penalty of banishment from their presence ; and it is well it were softened to the audacious lover, by permission, or command to live, without which, absence and death are accounted synonymous. On the other hand, the heroes, whatever kingdoms they have to govern, or other earthly duties to perform, live through these folios for love alone ; and the most extraordinary revolutions which can agitate the world are ascribed to the charms of a Mandana or a Statira acting upon the crazy understanding of their lovers. Nothing can be so uninteresting as the frigid extravagance with which these lovers express their passion ; or, in their own phrase, nothing can be more freezing than their

flames, more creeping than their flights of passion. Yet the line of metaphysical gallantry which they exhibited had its fashion, and a long one, both in France and England. In England they continued to be read by our grandmothers during the Augustan age of English, and while Addison was amusing the world with its wit, and Pope by its poetry. The fashion did not decay till about the reign of George I.; and even more lately, Mrs. Lennox, patronised by Dr. Johnson, wrote a very good imitation of Cervantes, entitled, *The Female Quixote*, which had these works for its basis. They are now totally forgotten.

The Modern Romance, so ennobled by the productions of so many master hands, would require a long disquisition. But we can here only name that style of composition in which De Foe rendered fiction more impressive than truth itself, and Swift could render plausible even the grossest impossibilities.

## ESSAY ON AMADIS DE GAUL.\*

THE fame of Amadis de Gaul has reached to the present day, and has indeed become almost provincial in most languages of Europe. But this distinction has been attained rather in a mortifying manner: for the hero seems much less indebted for his present renown to his historians, Lobeira, Montalvo, and Herberay, than to Cervantes, who selected their labours, as one of the best known books of Chivalry, and therefore the most prominent object for his ridicule. In this case, as in many others, the renown of the victor has carried down to posterity the memory of the vanquished; and, excepting the few students of black letter, we believe no reader is acquainted with Amadis de Gaul, otherwise than as the prototype of Don Quixote de la Mancha. But the ancient knight seems now in a fair way of being rescued from this degrading state of notoriety, and of once more resuming a claim to public notice upon his own proper merits; having, with singular good fortune, engaged in his cause two such authors as Mr. Southey and Mr. Rose. As the subject of the two articles before us is in fact the same, we shall adopt the prose version of Mr. Southey, as forming the fullest text for the general commentaries which we have to offer; reserving till the conclusion, the particular remarks which occur to us upon Mr. Rose's poem.

Mr. Southey has prefixed to his translation certain preliminary notices, which, by an odd and rather affected arrangement, he has split into sections or chapters, numbered 1st, 2nd, 3rd, &c.; a division which is the more arbitrary, as no titles are given to these sections. Many readers, thus left to conjecture the causes and purpose of the arrange-

\* *Amadis de Gaul*. By Vasco Lobeyra. From the Spanish Version of Garcilordonez de Montalvo. By Robert Southey. Four Volumes, 12mo. London.

*Amadis de Gaul*: A Poem, in Three Books. Freely Translated from the First Part of the French Version of Nicolas de Herberay, Sieur des Essars. With Notes, by William Stewart Rose, Esq. 12mo. London.

ment, must find themselves at a loss ; and we readily confess ourselves to be of the number : for an unbroken inquiry respecting the author of Amadis, occupies most of the paragraphs thus unnecessarily detached from each other. This inquiry, particularly connected as it stands with the history of romance in general, has claim to our peculiar attention.

The earliest copy of Amadis de Gaul, now known to exist, is the Spanish edition of Garcia Ordóñez de Montalvo, which is used by Mr. Southey in his translation. Montalvo professes, in general terms, to have revised and corrected this celebrated work from the ancient authorities. He is supposed principally to have used the version of Vasco de Lobeira, a Portuguese knight who died in the beginning of the 15th century. But a dispute has arisen, whether even Lobeira can justly claim the merit of being the original author of this famous and interesting romance. Nicolas de Herberay, who translated Montalvo's work into French in 1575, asserts positively, that it was originally written in that language ; and adds this remarkable passage : "*J'en ay trouvé encores quelques reste d'un vieil livre escrit à la main en langage Picard, sur lequel j'estime que les Espagnols ont fait leur traduction, non pas de tout suivant le vrai original, comme l'on pourra veoir par cestuy, car ilz en ont obmis en aucuns endroits et augmenté aux autres.*" Mr. Southey, however, setting totally aside the evidence of Herberay, as well as of Monsieur de Tressan, who also affirms the existence of a Picard original of Amadis, is decidedly of opinion, that Vasco de Lobeira was the original author. It is with some hesitation that we venture to differ from Mr. Southey, knowing, as we well know, that his acquaintance with the Portuguese literature entitles him to considerable deference in such an argument : yet, viewing the matter on the proofs he has produced, and considering also the general history and progress of romantic composition, we incline strongly to think with Mr. Rose, that the story of Amadis is originally of French extraction.

The earliest tales of romance which are known to us, are uniformly in verse ; and this was very natural : for they were in a great measure the composition of the minstrels, who gained their livelihood by chanting and reciting them. This is peculiarly true of the French minstrels, as appears from the well-known quotation of Du Cange from the Romance of Du Guesclin, where the champions of romantic fiction are enumerated as the subject of their lays.

"ROLLANS

Les quatre fils HAIMON et CHARLON li plus grans  
Li dus LIONS DE BOURGES, et GULON DE CONNANS  
PERCEVAL LI GALOIS, LANCELOT, et TRISTANS,  
ALEXANDRE, ARTUS, GODEFROI li fachans  
De quoy cils menestriers font les noble romans."

There are but very few prose books of chivalry in the world, which are not either still extant, or are at least known to have existed originally, in the form of metrical romances. The very name by which such compositions are distinguished, is derived from the *romance* or corrupted Latin employed by the minstrels, and long signified any history or fable narrated in vulgar poetry. It would be almost endless to cite examples of this proposition. The Tales of Arthur and his Round Table, by far the most fertile source of the romances of chivalry, are all known to have existed as metrical compositions long before the publication of the prose folios on the same subject. These poems the minstrels used to chant at solemn festivals nor was it till the decay of that extraordinary profession that romances in prose were substituted for their lays. The invention of printing hastened the declension of poetical romance. The sort of poetry employed by the minstrels, differed only from prose in being more easily retained by the memory, but when copies were readily and cheaply multiplied by means of the press, the exertion of recollection became unnecessary.

As early as the fifteenth century, numerous prose versions of the most celebrated romances were executed in France and England, which were printed in the course of the sixteenth. These works are now become extremely rare. Mr Southey attributes this to their great popularity. But if their popularity lasted, as he supposes, till they were worn out by repeated perusal, the printers would have found their advantage in supplying the public with new editions. The truth is, that the editions first published of these expensive folio romances were very small. Abridgments and extracts served the purpose of the vulgar. Meanwhile, the taste of the great took another turn, and the books of chivalry disappeared in consequence of the neglect and indifference of their owners. More than a century elapsed betwixt their being read for amusement, and sought for as curiosities, and such a lapse of time would render any work scarce, were the editions as numerous as those of the Pilgrim's Progress.

To return to our subject--It appears highly probable to us that Lobeira's prose Amadis was preceded by a metrical romance, according to the general progress which we observe in the history of similar productions.

Another general remark authorizes the same conclusion. It is well known that the romances of the middle ages were not announced to the hearers as works of mere imagination. On the contrary, they were always affirmed by the narrators to be matter of historical fact, nor was this disputed by the simplicity of the audience. The gallant knights and lovely dames, for whose delight these romances were composed and sung, were neither shocked by the incongruities of the work, nor the marvellous turn of the adventures. Some old tradition was



adopted for the subject of the tale ; favourite and well-known names were introduced. An air of authenticity was thus obtained ; the prejudices of the audience conciliated : and the feudal baron believed as firmly in the exploits of Roland and Oliver, as a sturdy Celt of our day in the equally sophisticated poems of Ossian.—Hence, the grand sources of romantic fiction have been traced to the Brut of Maister Wace, himself a translator of Geoffrey of Monmouth, who put into form the traditions of the bards of Wales and Armorica ; to the fabulous history of Turpin, from which sprung the numerous romances of Charlemagne and his twelve Peers ; and, finally, to the siege of Troy, as narrated by Dares Phrygius, and to the exploits of Alexander. Other and later heroes became also the subject of romance. Such were William of Orange, called *Short-nose*, Richard of Normandy, Ralph Blundeville Earl of Chester, Richard Cœur de Lion, Robert the Bruce, Bertrand du Guesclin, &c. &c. The barons also, before whom these tales were recited, were often flattered by a fabulous genealogy which deduced their pedigree from some hero of the story. A peer of England, the Earl of Oxford, if we recollect aright, conceited himself to be descended of the doughty Knight of the Swan ; and, what is somewhat to our present purpose, the French family of Bonneau deduce their pedigree from Dariolette, the complaisant confidant of Elisene, mother to Amadis.

A Portuguese minstrel would therefore have erred grossly in choosing for his subject a palpable and absolute fiction, in which he could derive no favour from the partialities and preconceived opinions of those whose applause he was ambitious to gain. But if we suppose Amadis to have been the exclusive composition of Lobeira, we must suppose him to have invented a story, not only altogether unconnected with the history of his own country, but identified with the real or fabulous history of France, which was then the ally of Castile, and the mortal foe of Portugal. The difficulty is at once removed, if we allow that author to have adopted from the French minstrels a tale of their country, founded probably upon some ancient and vague tradition, in the same manner as they themselves had borrowed from the British bards, and Geoffrey of Monmouth, their translator, the slender foundation upon which they erected the voluminous and splendid history of Arthur, and the doughty chivalry of his Round Table. This is the more probable, as we actually find Amadis enumerated among other heroes of French romance mentioned in an ancient collection of stories, called *Cursor Mundi*, translated from the French into English metre.

“ Men lykyn jestis for to here  
And Romans rede in diverse manere,  
Of Alexandre the conquerour ;  
Of Julius Cæsar the emperour ;

Of Greece and Troy the strong stryfe ;  
 There many a man lost his lyf ;  
 Of Brut, that baron bold of hond,  
 The first conquerour of Eng lond ;  
 Of Kyng Artour, that was so ryche,  
 Was non in his tyme so ilyche ;  
 Of wonders that among his knyghts fell,  
 And auntyrs deden as men her telle ;  
 As Gaweyn and othir full abyll,  
 Which that kept the round tabyll ;  
 Hou King Charles & Rowland fawghte  
 With Sarazins nold thei be cawght ;  
 Of Tristram and Ysode the swete,  
 Hou thei with love first gan mete ;  
 Of King John & of Isenbras ;  
 Of Ydoine and *Amadas*.—*Warton's History of Poetry.*

If the hero last mentioned be really Amadis de Gaul, the question as to the existence of a French or Picard history of his exploits, is fairly put to rest. For, not to mention that the date of the poem above quoted is at least coeval with Vasco de Lobeira, it is admitted, that no French translation of the Portuguese work was made till that of Herberay in 1575 ; and consequently the author of the *Cursor Mundi* must have alluded to a French original, altogether independent of Lobeira's work.

Mr. Southey himself, with the laudable impartiality of an editor, more attached to truth than system, has produced the evidence of one Portuguese author, who says that *Pedro* de Lobeira translated the history of Amadis de Gaul from the French language, at the instance of the Infant Don Pedro. *Agiologio Lusitano*, tom. i. p. 480.—Now, although this author *has* made a mistake, in calling Lobeira, *Pedro*, instead of *Vasco*, yet his authority at least proves, that there existed, even in Portugal, some tradition that Amadis had originally been composed in French, although the authors of that country have, with natural partiality, endeavoured to vindicate Lobeira's title to the fame of an original author.\* One singular circumstance tends to corroborate what is stated in the *Agiologio*. It is certain that the work was executed under the inspection of an Infant of Portugal ; for Montalvo expressly states, that at the instance of this high personage, an alteration, of a very peculiar nature, was made in the story. The passage, which is curious in more respects than one, is thus rendered by Mr. Southey.

“At the end of the 41st chapter, it is said that Briolania would have

\* The evidence of Nicola Antonia, in the *Vetus Hispana Bibliotheca*, is, as remarked by Mr. Rose, extremely inconclusive. He adds *ut fama est* to his affirmation that Lobeira was the original author of Amadis, and quotes the equally cautious expression of Antonius Augustinus—“*Quarum fabularum primum fuisse auctorem Vascum Lobeiram, Lusitanis iactant.*”—*Amadis de Gaule, a poem*, Introd. p. vi.

given herself and her kingdom to Amadis ; but he told her, right loyally, how he was another's. In the Spanish version, ff. 72, this passage follows—' But though the Infante Don Alfonso of Portugal, having pity upon this fair damsel, ordered it to be set down after another manner, that was what was his good pleasure, *and not what actually was written of their loves* ; and they relate that history of these loves thus, though, with more reason, faith is to be given to what we before said :— Briolania, being restored to her kingdom, and enjoying the company of Amadis and Agraves, persisted in her love ; and, seeing no way whereby she could accomplish her mortal desires, she spake very secretly with the damsel, to whom Amadis, and Galaor, and Agraves, had each promised a boon, if she would guide Don Galaor where he might find the Knight of the Forest. This damsel was now returned, and to her she disclosed her mind, and besought her with many tears, to advise some remedy for that strong passion. The damsel then, in pity to her lady, demanded, as the performance of his promise, from Amadis, that he should not go out of a certain tower till he had a son or a daughter by Briolania ; and they say, that, upon this, Amadis went into the tower, because he would not break his word ; and there, because he would not consent to Briolania's desires, he remained, losing both his appetite and his sleep, till his life was in great danger. This being known in the court of King Lisuarte, his lady Oriana, that she might not lose him, sent and commanded him to grant the damsel's desire ; and he having this command, and considering, that by no other means could he recover his liberty, or keep his word, took that fair Queen for his leman, and had by her a son and a daughter at one birth. But it was not so, unless Briolania, seeing how Amadis was drawing nigh to death in the tower, told the damsel to release him of his promise, if he would only remain till Don Galaor was arrived ; doing thus, that she might so long enjoy the sight of the fair and famous knight, whom, when she did not behold, she thought herself in great darkness.' This carries with it more reason why it should be believed ; because this fair Queen was afterwards married to Don Galaor, as the fourth book relates." Introduction, p. vii.

It seems to us clear, from this singular passage, that the work upon which Lobeira was busied, under the auspices of the Infant Don Alfonso, or what Infant soever was his patron, must necessarily have been a translation, more or less free, from some ancient authority. If Amadis was the mere creature of Lobeira's fancy, the author might no doubt be unwilling, in compliance with the whimsical compassion of his patron for the fair Briolania, to violate the image of ideal perfection pictured in his hero, to which fidelity was so necessary an attribute ; but he could in no sense be said to interpolate *what actually was*

*written*, unless he derived his story from some authority, independent of the resources of his own imagination.

We do not think it necessary to enter into the question, how far the good taste and high spirit displayed in this romance, entitles us to ascribe it exclusively to the French. The modest assurance with which Monsieur de Tressan advances the claim of his nation upon this ground, is, as Mr. Southey has justly observed, a truly French argument. We have not, however, that very high opinion of the Portuguese character, about the conclusion of the 14th century, which has been adopted by Mr. Southey. We recollect that the "good and loyal Portuguese, who fought at Aljubarrota for King Joam of good memory," were indebted for that victory to Northberry and Hartfell, the English mercenaries, who arranged their host in so strong a position; to the headlong impetuosity of the Gascon, Bernese, and French adventurers, who composed the van of the Spanish army; and to the jealousy or cowardice of the Castilians, who refused to support their auxiliaries: so that little of the fame of that memorable day, can in truth be imputed to the courage of the Portuguese. At that time, indeed, Castile and Portugal were rather the stages whereon foreigners exercised their courage in prize-fighting, than theatres for the display of national valour. Edward the Black Prince, John of Gaunt, John Chandos, and Sir Edward Knowles, fought in those countries, against Bertram of Clesquy and the flower of French chivalry; but we hear little of the prowess of the inhabitants themselves. Such an insolent superiority was exercised by the English and Gascons, who came to the assistance of the King of Portugal, that, upon occasion of some discontent, they erected the pennon of St. George as a signal of revolt; elected Sir John Soltier, a natural son of the Black Prince, to be their captain; and proclaimed themselves, *friends to God and enemies to all the world*; nor had the King any other mode of saving his country from pillage, than by complying with their demands. Indeed, it is more than probable, that both Portugal and Spain would have fallen under the dominion of England, if the port wine, which now agrees so well with the constitution of our southern brethren, had been equally congenial to that of their martial ancestors: "But the Englyshmen founde the wynes there so strong, hot and brinning, that it corrupted their heads, and dried their bowelles, and brente their lightes and lyvers; and they had no remedy; for they could fynde but lytill good water to tempre their wynes, nor to refresh them; which was contrary to their natures; for Englyshmen, in their own countries, are sweetly nourished; and there they were brent both within and without." To such circumstances was Portugal occasionally indebted to safety, at the hands of her too dangerous allies. It seems to us more than probable,

that, during these wars, the French or Picard original of Amadis, was acquired by Lobeira from some minstrel, attendant upon the numerous Breton and Gascon knights, who followed the banners of the Earl of Cambridge, or the Duke of Lancaster ; for to Brittany or Acquitaine we conceive the original ought to be referred.

But while we cannot believe, against the concurring testimony of Herberay and Tressan, as well as against the usual progress of romantic composition, that Amadis de Gaul is, from beginning to end, the invention of Lobeira ; yet, we conceive enough may safely be ascribed to him, to warrant the praises bestowed on him by Mr. Southey, and perhaps to entitle him to the name of an original author. We do not indeed know the precise nature of Lobeira's work, nor what additions have been made to it by Montalvo ; but it is easy to conceive that it must have been something very different from the Picard original. In making some remarks on the style and structure of Amadis, we shall endeavour to contrast them with those of the earlier romance.

The metrical romances differed in many most material particulars from the prose romances by which they were superseded. The former partook of the character of the rhapsodists, by whom they were usually composed, and always sung. It was vain to expect from the ignorant minstrels, or those who wrote for them, a well connected history : nor, if they had been capable of such a refined composition, could its beauties have been relished by their audience, to whom they had seldom time to sing above one or two of the adventures contained in a long romance. Their narration was therefore rambling and desultory. One adventure followed another, without much visible connection ; the only object of the author being, to produce such detached pieces as might interest during the time of recitation, without any regard to the unity of the composition. Thus, in many cases, the only connection seems to arise from the same hero figuring in all the adventures, which are otherwise as much detached from each other as the scenes in the box of a showman. But when a book was substituted for the minstrel's song, when the adventures of a *preux chevalier* were no longer listened to by starts, amid the roar of convivial festivity, but furnished the amusement of the closet, and that in so permanent a shape, that the student might turn back to resume the connections which had escaped him ; it became the study of the author to give a greater appearance of uniformity to his work. As an arrangement, in which all the incidents should seem to conduce to one general end, must soon have become a merit with the reader ; it became, necessarily, to the author, a worthy object of attainment. Hence, in the best of our prose romances, and particularly in Amadis de Gaul, a combined and regular progress of the story may

be discovered ; whereas the metrical romances present, with a few exceptions, a suite of unconnected adventures, often striking and splendid indeed in themselves, but appearing rather an assemblage of loose materials for a history, than a history itself. But the advantage, thus gained by the prose romances, was often lost, by carrying too far the principle on which it was grounded. Having once regularly completed a story, good taste and judgment required them to stop, and choose for their future labours some subject unconnected with what was already perfect. But this was not the genius of the age. When they had secured an interesting set of characters, the authors could not resist the temptation of bringing them again upon the stage ; and hence, the endless continuations with which Amadis and the other romances of that class were saddled, and of which Mr. Southey complains with so much justice. Only four books of Amadis are genuine. The remaining twenty are an interpolation, containing the history of his descendants, in all respects greatly inferior to the original.

In another point of view, it appears to us not quite clear that the prose romancers obtained any superiority over their poetical predecessors. The rude poetry of the minstrels was no doubt frequently rambling and diffusive ; partaking, in short, of those faults which naturally attach to unpremeditated composition. But we doubt greatly, whether the studied and affected ornaments of the prose romance are not more tedious and intolerable than the rhapsodies of the minstrels. Mr. Southey, in his translation of Amadis, has, with due attention to modern taste, shortened the long speeches of the lovers, and simplified many of their high-flown compliments. On the other hand, the custom of interweaving the history with little descriptive sketches, which, in many instances, were very beautiful, was dropt by the prose narrators, as an unnecessary interruption to the continuation of the story. We allude to such passages as the following, which are introductions to the *Fyttes* of the unpublished romance of Merlin. The ancient orthography is altered, for the sake of modern readers.

“ In time of winter *along*\* it is,  
The fowls lesen their bliss,  
The leaves fallen off the tree,  
Rain rusheth along the countrey,  
Maidens lose their lovely hew,  
But still they loven that be true

. . . . .

In May is merry time swithe,  
Fowls in wood they make them blithe,  
Swains 'gun on justing ride,  
Maidens dresen them with pride

. . . . .

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\* Tedious.

Merry it is in the month of June,  
 When fennel hangeth abroad in town,  
 Violet and roses flower  
 Groweth then on maidens bower,  
 The sun is hot the day is long,  
 The small birds maketh merry song "

Of such passages, which serve to relieve the heaviness of the perpetually recurring fight and tournament, the prose romance affords us no example. The ornaments which it presents, are those of studied description, every word of which is laboured, as applicable to the precise scene which is described, without expressing or exciting any general sensibility of the beauties of nature. We may take, as no unfavourable instance, the account of the tower and gardens constructed by Apollidon in the Firm Island.

"In that tower were nine apartments, three on a floor; and though some part was the work of skilful artists, the rest was wrought by the skill and science of Apollidon himself, so wondrously, that no man in the world could rightly value, nor even understand its exceeding rarity. And because it would be long to describe it all at length, I shall only say, that the tower stood in the midst of a garden, surrounded with a wall of goodly stone and mortar, and the garden was the goodliest that might be seen by reason of its trees and herbs, and fountains of sweet water. Of those trees, many were hung with fruit the whole year through, and others bore flowers, and round about the garden by the walls, were covered walks, with golden trellis work, through which might all that pleasant greenness be seen. The ground was covered with stones, some clear as the crystal, others coloured like rubies and other precious stones, the which Apollidon had procured from certain islands in the East, where jewels, gold, and other rare things are produced, by reason of the great heat of the sun continually acting. These islands are uninhabited, save only by wild beasts, and, for fear of those beasts, no man durst ever set foot thereon, till Apollidon, by his cunning, wrought such spells, that it became safe to enter there, and then the neighbouring people, being assured of this, took advantage thereof, and ventured there also, and thus the world became stocked with sundry things which it had never before known. To the four sides of the tower, water was brought from the neighbouring mountains by metal pipes, and collected into four fountains, and the water spouted so high from the golden pillars, and through the mouths of animals, that it was easy to reach it from the windows of the first story, for it was caught in golden basons wrought on the pillars, and by those fountains was the whole garden watered." *Amadis*, vol. iv. p. 13.

From comparing the slight, extemporary, and natural landscape-sketches of the ancient minstrel, with the laboured and minute picture

of Lobeira or Montalvo, the reader may derive some idea of the marked difference between the style of the more ancient tales of chivalry, and those by which they were succeeded. The description of the minstrel appears almost as involuntary as it is picturesque, and is enlivened by the introduction of the birds, the dames, and the gallant knights. The prose author seems to have sat down to describe Apollidon's tower, his water-pipes, Kensington gravel walks, and Dutch trellis, with a sort of *malice prepense* against his reader's patience : and his account exactly resembles the plan and elevation of a capability-man or architect. The following contrast regards a scene of a more animated nature, and, of all others, that which occurs most frequently in romance.

" Alexander made a cry hardi,  
 ' Ore tost, aby, aby '  
 Then the knights of Achaye  
 Justed with them of Arabye;  
 Egypt justed with them of Tyre,  
 Simple knights with rich syre  
 There ne was forgiſt ne forbearing,  
 Between Vavasour or King.  
 Before men mighten and behind,  
 Contest seek, and contest find.  
 With Persians fought the Gregois .  
 There was cry and great *hontous* ;  
 There might men find his peer ,  
 There lose many his destrier , \*  
 There was quicke in little thrawe ,  
 Many gentil knight y-slawe ;  
 Many arm, many heavod,  
 Sone from the body reaved ;  
 Many gentle ladye  
 There lost quickly her *ami* ;  
 There was many y-maim'd ,  
 Many fair pensill bebledde  
 There were swords liklaking , †  
 There were speres in blood bathing .  
 Both Kings there, sans doute,  
 Y-dashed in with all their routc ,  
 Many lands, both near and far,  
 Lost their Lords in this war  
 Earth quaked of their riding ,  
 The weather thicken'd of their crying ;  
 The blood of them that were y-slawe,  
 Ran by floods to the lawe "

In this description, as in the former, may be traced the spirit of the poet, warming as he advanced in narration ; from the encountering of the hosts, when war, like death, levelled all distinction betwixt the vassal and monarch, to the fall of the loves of ladies and the lords of domain, to the bloody banners, clashing swords, and gory lances, until the ground shook under the charge of the combatants, the air was

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\* War-horse.

† Clashing



darkened at their shouts, and the blood of the dying poured like torrents into the valley. The following is the description of the grand battle betwixt Lisuarte and Aravigo, in which the timely assistance of Amadis, with his father, gave the victory to the father of Oriana.

"Presently (King Lisuarte) went down the side of the mountain into the plain ; and as it was now upon that hour when the sun was rising, it shone upon their arms ; and they appeared so well disposed, that their enemies, who had before held them as nothing, now thought of them otherwise.—In this array, which you have heard, they moved slowly over the field one against the other

"At this season, King Perion, with his sons Amadis and Florestan, entered the plain upon their goodly steeds ; and with their arms of the Serpents, which shone brightly in the sun ; and they rode on to place themselves between the two armies brandishing their spears, whose points were so polished and clear, that they glittered like stars ; and the father went between his sons Much were they admired by both parts, and each would willingly have had them on his side ; but no one knew whom they came to aid, nor who they were. They, seeing that the host of Brian of Monjuste was about to join battle, put spurs to their horses, and rode up near to his banner ; then set themselves against King Targadan, who came against him. Glad was Don Brian of their help, though he knew them not ; but they, when they saw that it was time, rode to attack the host of King Targadan, so fiercely, that all were astonished In that encounter, King Perion struck that other King so hardly, that a part of the spear soon entered his breast, and he fell Amadis smote Abdasian the Fierce, so that armour nothing profited him, but the lance passed through from side to side, and he fell like a dead man. Don Florestan drove Carduel, saddle and man, under the horses feet these three being the bravest of that battalion, they had come forwards to combat the Knights of the Serpents Then laid they hand to sword, and passed through the first squadron, felling all before them, and charged the second : and when they were thus between both, there was to be seen what marvellous feats of prowess they wrought with their swords such, that none did like them on either side ; and they had now under their horses more than ten knights whom they had smitten down. But when their enemies saw that they were no more than three, they charged them on all sides, laying on such heavy blows that the aid of Don Brian was full needful, who came up with his Spaniards, a brave people, and well horsed, and rode among the enemy, slaying and felling them, though his own men fell also ; so that the Knights of the Serpents were succoured, and the enemy so handled, that they perforce gave back upon the third battalion. Then there was a great press, and a great danger for all ; and many knights died upon either side . but what King Perion and his sons did

there cannot be expressed. Such was the uproar and confusion, that King Aravigo feared lest his own men, who had given ground, should make the others fly; and he called aloud to Arcalaus, to advance with all the battalions, and attack in one body. This presently he did, and King Aravigo with him; but without delay King Lisuarte did the same so that the whole battle was now joined: and such was the clang of strokes, and the cry and noise of the horsemen, that the earth trembled, and the valleys rung again."

In this last quotation, as in the former, the inferiority of Lobeira is sufficiently manifest, though his description is by no means void of spirit. It cannot be alleged that this is owing to the poetry; for no modern will attribute much to the force of the minstrel's numbers; and the author of *Amadis* is far from disclaiming the use of poetical ornament. The difference arises from the disposition to specification, and to exchange general effect for minute description, which we have already remarked as an attribute of the prose romance.

The most curious part, however, of this curious subject, respects the change in manners which appears to have taken place about the middle of the 14th century, when what we now call the Spirit of Chivalry seems to have shone forth with the most brilliant lustre. In the older romances, we look in vain for the delicacy which, according to Burke, robbed vice of half its evil, by depriving it of all its grossness. The tales of the older metrical romancers, founded frequently on fact, and always narrated in a coarse and downright style, excite feelings sometimes ludicrous, and often disgusting, and in fact can only be excelled by the unparalleled *fabliaux* published by Barbazan, which, although professedly written to be recited to noble knights and dames, exhibit a nakedness, not only in the description, but in the turn of the story, which would now banish them even from a bagnio, unless of the very lowest order. The ladies in metrical romances not only make the first advances on all occasions, but with a degree of vivacity, copied it would seem from the worthy spouse of Potiphar. For example, a certain knight called Sir Amis, having declined the proffered favours of the Lady Belsaunt, pleading his allegiance to his liege lord, receives from her the following sentimental rebuke.

"That merry maiden of great renown  
 Answered, 'Sir Knight, thou has no crown—  
 For God that bought thee dear,  
 Whether art thou priest or parson,  
 Other art thou monk, other canon,  
 That preachest me thus here?"

Thou never shouldst have been a Knight  
 To go amongst maidens bright,  
 Thou shouldst have been a frere

---

\* Art not shaved like a monk.

He that learned thee thus to preach,  
 The devil of hell I him biteche,  
 My brother though he were.' " *Amis & Amelion.*

As the damsels were urgent in their demands, the knights of these more early ages were often brutally obstinate in their refusal ; and instead of the gentle denial which the love-sick Briolania received from the courteous Amadis, they were too apt to exclaim like Bevis of Hamton, when invited to a rendezvous by the fair Josiana a Saracen princess—

"Forth the Knights go can  
 To Bevis' chamber they came anon,  
 And prayed, as he was gentleman,  
 Come speak with Josian.  
 Bevis stoutly in this stound  
 Haf up his head from the ground

And said, 'If ye ne were messagers,  
 I should ye slay, ye lossengers ;  
 I ne will rise one foot fro' grounde  
 For to speak with an heathen hounde ;  
 She is a hound, also be ye,  
 Out of my chamber swith ye flee.' "

All this coarseness, in word and deed, was effectually banished from the romances of chivalry which were composed subsequent to 1350. Sentiment had begun to enter into these fictions, not casually, or from the peculiar delicacy of an individual author, but as a necessary qualification of the heroes and heroines whose loves occupied their ponderous folios.

Of this refinement we find many instances in Amadis. Balays of Corsante being repulsed by a damsel, explains his sentiments upon such points. "My good lady," Balays answered, "think no more of what I said : it becomes knights to serve damsels, and to woo their love, and becomes them to deny, as you have done : and albeit, at the first, we think it much to obtain of them what we desire, yet when wisely and discreetly they resist our inordinate appetites, keeping that without which they are worthy of no praise, they be even of ourselves more revered and commended." Notwithstanding this favourable alteration in their tone, the reader is not to understand that the morality of these writings was in fact very materially amended ; for at no period was the age of chivalry distinguished for female virtue. Those who have supposed the contrary, have never opened a romance written before the tomes of Calprenede, and Scudery, and judge of Queen Guenever, Iseult, and Oriana, by what they find there recorded of Mandane and Cassandra. But the genuine prose romances of chivalry, although less gross in language and circumstance, contain as little matter for edification as the tales of the minstrels, to which they suc-

ceeded. Lancelot du Lac is the adulterous lover of Guenever, the wife of his friend and sovereign ; and Tristram de Lionel the incestuous seducer of his uncle's spouse, as well in the prose folios of Rusticien de Puise, and the Knight of the Castle of Gast, as in the rhymes of Chretien de Troyes and Thomas of Erceldoune. Nor did the tales of a more modern date turn upon circumstances more correct : witness the history of the Petit Jehan de Saintré, and many others. Of Amadis, in particular, Mr. Southey has observed that "all the first-born children are illegitimate," because "the hero must be every way irresistible." The same observation applies to most romances of chivalry ; so that one would be tempted to suppose that the damsels of those days, doomed frequently to wander through lonely woods infested by robbers, giants, and caitiffs of every description, were so far from trusting, like the lady in Comus, to the magic power of true virginity, that they hastened to confer upon some faithful knight a treasure so very precarious, while it was yet their own to bestow. But the modern man of gallantry will be surprised to hear, that this by no means diminished either the zeal or duty of the lover, who had thus attained the summit of his hopes. On the contrary, unless in the case of here and there a Don Galaor, who is always painted as a subaltern character, a *preux chevalier* was bound, not only to maintain the honour of the lady, thus deposited in his custody, but to observe towards her the fidelity and respect of religious observance.\* Every one knows how long Sir Lancelot had enjoyed the favours of Queen Guenever ; and yet that scrupulous knight went distracted, and remained so till he was healed by the Sang-real, merely because by enchantment he was brought to the bed of the lovely Dame Elaine. As for Amadis, the bare suspicion which Oriana conceived of his infidelity, occasioned his doing penance on the Poor Rock in a manner unequalled, unless by the desolate knight who averred himself to have retired to a cavern, where he "used for his bed mosse, for his candle mosse, for his covering mosse, and, unless now and then a few coals, mosse for his meat ; a dry food, God wot, and a fresh ; but so moistened with wet tears, and so salte, that it was hard to conjecture whether it was better to feed or fast."†

In short, the love of the knights-errant was like their laws of honour, altogether beyond the common strain of feeling, as well as incapable of being measured by the standard of religion and morality. Their rules of honour have in some degree survived the fate of their order ; and we have yet fatal instances of bloodshed for a "word of reproach," a "bratchet hound," or such other causes of duel as figure in the tales of the Table Round. But the love which was not only fostered,

\* The Cecisbel of Italy derive their order from the days of chivalry. The reader is referred to the *Memoires de Grammont* for an account of the duties expected from them.

† *Progresses of Queen Elizabeth*, vol. ii. p. 130.

but imposed as a solemn duty by the laws of chivalry, is now only to be traced in such a romance as is before us. It subsisted, as we have seen, independent of maidenly chastity and conjugal fidelity ; and its source perhaps may be traced to a remote period of antiquity. Tacitus has noticed the respect in which women were held among the German tribes. The ladies of Britain were indulged with the privilege of a plurality of husbands ; and those of Scandinavia, although they were limited to one, might divorce him at their pleasure \* This sort of supremacy, the ladies appear at all times to have exercised over the descendants of the Northern tribes. It is true, as already mentioned, the homage paid their charms by the earlier heroes of chivalry, was interrupted and sullied by the roughness of their manners and expressions. To reverse the complaint of the Knight of the Burning Pestle, "one whom Amadis had styled couiteous damsel, Bevis would have called heathen hound ;" but the duty of obeying the hests and fighting for the honour of a lady, was indispensable even among the earliest and rudest sons of chivalry. In the course of the fourteenth century, this was sublimated and refined to the most extravagant degree ; so that the secret, inviolable, and romantic attachment of Amadis to Oriana might be easily paralleled by similar passages from real history. Even the zeal of devotion gave way to this all-devouring sentiment ; and very religious indeed must the knight have been, who had, as was predicated of Esplandian, God upon his *right* hand, and his lady upon his *left*.

We cannot leave this part of our subject, without bestowing our warm commendations on Mr. Southey, for disdaining to follow Tressan and Herberay, in the impure descriptions and obscenities which they have much oftener introduced, than found, in the Spanish original. Tressan in particular, whose talents and taste made it totally inexcusable, dwells with infinitely higher gust upon the gallantries of Don Galaor, than upon the love of Amadis ; and describes them with that vicious and perverted love of obscenity, which Mr. Southey so justly reprobates, as "peculiarly and characteristically the disgrace of French literature." May a practice, so ominous to the morals and manly virtue of our nation, long be a stranger to the writings of those who profess to afford to Britons information or pleasure !

The manners described in *Amadis de Gaul* are, in other respects, strictly feudal and chivalrous. The points of right and honour which

\* A curious instance may be found in *Eyrbiggja Saga*. Thordisa the wife of Borck, an Icelandic chief, attempted to stab one Eyulf Grae, the friend and guest of her husband Borck interfering, administered to his wife some domestic chastisement. But mark the consequence. "When Borck departed to Helgafell, Thordisa, standing before the door of the house, called witnesses to bear testimony, that she divorced her husband Borck, assigning for a cause that he had struck her, and that she would no longer submit to such injuries. Thereupon the household goods were divided between them."

are discussed ; the rules of combat and of truce ; the high and rigid adherents to knightly faith, are all features of the 14th and 15th centuries. What may appear to the modern reader one of the most strained instances of the latter, is the conduct of King Lisuarte in the fourth book, to whom an old man presents a crown and mantle, under the condition, that he shall restore them at his *cour pleniére*, or grant the suppliant a boon in their stead. On the appointed day, the crown and mantle, having been conveyed out of Lisuarte's custody by enchantment, the boon demanded by the stranger in lieu is, that Oriana, the daughter of Lisuarte, should be delivered up to him.

"Lisuarte exclaimed, Ah, knight, thou hast asked a great thing ! and all who were present were greatly grieved. But the King, who was the most loyal man in the world, bade them not trouble themselves. It is better, said he, to lose my daughter, than to break my word ; the one evil afflicts few, the other would injure all ; for how would the people keep faith with one another, if they could not depend upon the King's truth ? And he commanded his daughter to be brought. When the Queen and her ladies heard that, they made the most sorrowful outcry that ever was heard : but the King ordered them to their chambers ; and he forbade all his people to lament, on pain of losing his favour. My daughter, cried he, must fare as God hath appointed ; but my word shall never be wilfully broken."

Instances of a similar rigid adherence to knightly faith can be produced from real history. The Duke of Gueldres being on a journey through Prussia, was laid in wait for and made prisoner by certain banditti, or adventurers, commanded by a squire named Arnold. When the Grand Master of the Teutonic Order heard what had happened, he marched against the castle where the Duke was confined, with so strong a force, that Arnold durst not abide his coming. Hereupon he said to his prisoner, "Sir Duke, ye are my prisoner, and I am your master. Ye are a gentleman and true knight ; ye have sworn, and given me your faith. I think not to abide the master of Pruce ; he cometh hither with a great force ; tarry here, if you list ; I will carry with me your faith and promise." To this he added the name of the place to which he retreated, and so left the Duke at liberty. The Duke waited the arrival of the Grand Master ; but was so far from considering it as absolving him from his captivity, that no entreaties nor representations could stay him from acquitting his faith, by again putting himself into the hands of Arnold ; with whom he remained a prisoner, till he was ransomed by his friends.

The quarrel betwixt King Lisuarte and Amadis, because he would not bestow upon Galvanes the hand of his captive Madasima, and the dominion of the island which she inherited, and which he had conquered ; the manner in which Amadis and his kindred renounce the

service of Lisuarte ; the mutual defiances which are formally exchanged betwixt them, are all in the high tone of feudal solemnity, and are well worthy the attention of those who investigate the customs of the middle ages. The reader may compare the mode in which these defiances were received, with the deportment of the Black Prince, when he was served with a writ of summons to attend the Parliament at Paris. "When the Prince had read this letter, he had great marvel, and shook his head, and beheld fiercely the Frenchmen ; and when he had a little studied, he answered in this manner : 'Sirs, we will gladly go to Paris, to our uncle, sith he hath sent thus for us : but I assure you, that it shall be with basnet on our head, and sixty thousand men in our company.'" *Froissart*.

We have dwelt the more fully upon the manners of this romance, because they correspond exactly with those of the period in which it was written. In the romances which were composed during the declension of chivalry, the writers no longer painted from the life ; the manners which they described were as fictitious as the adventures which they narrated ; and the reader may look for such historical resemblances as we have noticed, with as little success, as if he were to consult a map for the situation of Taprobana, or the Firm Island.

We have already observed, that the story of Amadis is constructed with singular ingenuity. The unvaried recurrence of the combat with the lance and the sword, is indeed apt to try the patience of the modern reader ; although the translator's compassion has spared them some details, and "consolidated" (as he rather quaintly says) "many of those single blows, which have no reference to armorial anatomy." But, in defiance of the similarity of combat and adventure, the march of the story engages our attention ; and the successive events are well managed, to support each other, and to bring on the final catastrophe. It is not our intention to give a detailed account of the story ; but the following sketch may excite, rather than forestall, the curiosity of the reader.

Perion, king of Gaul, the guest of Garinter, king of Brittany, becomes enamoured of the fair Elisene, daughter of that monarch, obtains a private interview, and departs to his own kingdom. The princess becomes pregnant, and, to hide her disgrace, the child, afterwards the famous Amadis, is placed in a cradle, and launched into the sea. He is found by a knight of Scotland, and carried to that kingdom, where he is educated as the son of his preserver. Meanwhile, Perion marries Elisene, and they have a second son, called Galaor, who is carried off by a giant, and brought up to feats of arms and chivalry. Amadis, in the interim, is brought by his foster-father to the court of Scotland, where he meets Oriana, daughter of Lisuarte king of Britain. To her he becomes warmly attached, and, when knighted, prevails on her to receive him as her cavalier. Thus animated, he sets forth on his mili-

tary career, to assist Perion of Gaul, who is only known to him as the ally of the Scottish monarch, against Abyes, king of Ireland, who had besieged Perion in his capital. But no knight-errant ever attains the direct place of his destination, when he happens to have one, without some *bye-battles*. Several of these fall to Amadis's lot; and he is involved in many dangers, through which he is protected by the friendship of Urganda the Unknown, a mighty enchantress, the professed patroness of his house. Arriving at length at the capital of Gaul, he terminates the war, by the defeat and death of Abyes, whom he slays in single combat. After this exploit, by means of tokens which had been placed in his cradle, he is recognised and acknowledged as the son of Perion and Elisene. By this time Gandalac, the tutor of Galaor, conceived him to be ready to execute the purpose for which he had carried him off; namely, to maintain a battle on his account, against a brother giant who had injured him. Galaor having previously received the order of knighthood from his brother Amadis, though without knowing him, undertakes the combat, which terminates like all combats between giants and knights. Amadis, meanwhile, repairs to the court of Lisuarte, father of Oriana, and distinguishes himself by feats of chivalry, subduing all competitors by his courage, and attaching them to his person by his valour and liberality. Galaor runs a similar career, with this advantage over his brother, that he seldom fails to be repaid for his labours, by the distressed damoiselles whom he fortunes to relieve. At length Amadis, at the instigation of a certain dwarf, enters the castle of Arcalaus, whose captives he releases, and whom he defeats in single combat. Here, nevertheless, he is made prisoner by enchantment, and is in great peril, until released by the counter-spells of his friend Urganda. The conjurer was, however, not to be provoked with impunity: he contrives by a trick already noticed, to get into his possession the lovely Oriana; and, by another device, had well nigh slain her father Lisuarte, who was fortunately relieved by Galaor. An insurrection, fomented by Arcalaus, is also quelled, and Oriana is rescued from the enchanter, by the irresistible arm of Amadis. His faithful services are rewarded, by possession of his mistress; and thus closes the first book of Amadis. Among other distressed princesses relieved by Amadis, chanced to be the lovely queen Briolania,\* who

\* Although Cervantes states the dispute which occurred betwixt Don Quixote and Cardenio, in the Sierra Morena, to have respected the character of Queen Madasima, yet the person meant must have been this queen Briolania. For Elisabat, the surgeon, the person who gave the scandal, was the servant and attendant of Briolania, not of Madasima. Besides, the character of the latter was untainted (the story of her having twins by Amadis being altogether apocryphal); whereas even the knight of La Mancha could not have vouched for the chastity of Madasima, who was one of the numerous mistresses of Don Galaor, and otherwise a lady of slight conditions. Don Galvanés is supposed to have married her only for her fortune, and had therefore the greater right to resent Lisuarte's attempt to deprive him of it. If this be not an accidental mistake of Cervantes, he referred to some history of Amadis very different from that of Montalvo.



became desperately enamoured of her deliverer (being the same, indeed, whose hopeless passion excited the compassion of the prince of Portugal). Oriana, from an inaccurate account of this affair, becomes jealous, and dispatches a severe and cruel message to Amadis. This reaches him just as he had accomplished a notable adventure in the Firm Island, by entering an enchanted chamber, which could only be entered by the truest lover who lived upon earth. The message of Oriana drives him to distraction, he forswears arms, and becomes the companion of the hermit on the Poor Rock, where he does penance, till he is near death's door. The place of his residence at length comes to Oriana's knowledge, who, sensible of her injustice, recalls him to her presence, and of course to health and happiness. His return to the island of Windsor, where Lisuarte kept his court, is of the utmost importance to that prince, who reaps the advantage of his assistance in a direful contest with Cildadan of Ireland, assisted by certain sons of Anak, whose names it would take us too much time to write, since few of them are under six syllables in length. This giant brood being routed and dispersed, Lisuarte is induced, by certain deceitful, flattering, and envious courtiers, to treat the services of Amadis with slight and neglect. Ere long, this coldness comes to an open breach. Amadis, and his friends and followers, formally renounce the service of Lisuarte, and all retire, with their heroic leader, to the Firm Island, the sovereignty of which he had acquired. Galaor alone, bound by repeated obligations to Lisuarte, continues to adhere to him, and thus the author artfully contrives that the reader shall retain an interest even in the party opposed to Amadis. Oriana, during the absence of her lover, is secretly delivered of a son, named Esplandian; but as the heroines of the author are all mothers before they are wives, so they are never trusted with the education of their own children. The little Esplandian is carried off by a lioness, from whom he is rescued by a saint and hermit, called Nasciano. He is educated by this holy man, and in process of time presented to his grandfather Lisuarte, and received into the train of his own mother. During this long space, Amadis wanders about the world, redressing wrongs, slaying monsters, and turning the tide of battle against the oppressors wherever he comes. He has even the generosity (in disguise) to assist Lisuarte in a very desperate battle with Aravigo, a powerful monarch, whom the inveterate enchanter Arcalaus had stirred up against the king of Britain. But the emperor of Rome, El Patin, as the romance calls him, sends to Lisuarte, to demand the hand of his daughter Oriana; and the king, seduced by ambition, is ill-advised enough to force his daughter to this marriage, in spite of the advice of his best counsellors. Amadis repairs, under a new disguise, to Britain; and the knights sent by the emperor to receive his bride, sustain at his hands a thousand

disgraces, unpitied by the English, to whom they were odious, for their insolence and presumption. At length, the princess is put on board the Roman fleet ; but that fleet is intercepted, and after a desperate combat, finally defeated by a squadron fitted out from the Firm Island, to which Oriana is conveyed in triumph. The discretion of Amadis in his love, gave a colour to this exploit, totally foreign from the real cause. Amadis and Oriana, notwithstanding their long separation, meet like a brother and sister ; and the Knights of the Firm Island send to justify their proceedings to Lisuarte, declaring, that by his forcing her choice, his daughter was placed in the predicament of a distressed damsel, whose wrongs, by their oath of knighthood, they were bound to redress. The apology is ill received by the king of Britain, who, with the emperor of Rome, and all the allies who adhere to him, prepare to invade the Firm Island. Amadis, supported by his father King Perion, and many princes and queens who owed their crowns and honour to his prowess, assembles an army capable of meeting his enemy. Two desperate battles are fought, in which Lisuarte is finally worsted, but without being dishonoured by a total defeat. The brunt of the day falls upon the Romans, whom the author had no motive for sparing, and the emperor is slain on the field. In the mean while, the sainted hermit Nasciano, who had educated Esplandian, and to whom Oriana had in confession revealed the history of her love to Amadis, arrives in the camp of Lisuarte, and by his mediation brings about a truce, both parties agreeing to retreat a day's journey from each other. But Lisuarte, whose army was most weakened, was, by this retrograde movement, exposed to much danger. Arcalaus the enchanter had had influence enough with king Aravigo, to prevail upon him to levy a huge army, with which he lurked in the mountains, waiting until Lisuarte and Amadis should have exhausted their strength in mutual conflict. Being in some measure disappointed in his expectations, Aravigo held it for most expedient to fall upon Lisuarte in his retreat, whom, after a valiant resistance, he reduces to the last extremity. This is the moment which the author has chosen to exhibit the magnanimity of Amadis, and to bring about a reconciliation. The instant he hears of Lisuarte's danger, our hero flies to his assistance, and the reader will anticipate with what success : Aravigo is slain, and Arcalaus made prisoner, and cooped up in a cage of iron. The father of Oriana is reconciled to her lover, and the introduction of Esplandian has its effect in hastening so desirable an event. The nuptials of Amadis and Oriana take place, and the other heroines are distributed among the champions of the Firm Island, with great regard to merit. One thing yet remained — To finish the enchantments of the Firm Island, it was necessary that the fairest dame in the world should enter the enchanted chamber. Need we add, that dame was Oriana ? “ Then was the feast spread, and the

marriage-bed of Amadis and Oriana made in that chamber which they had won."

Through the whole of this long work, the characters assigned to the different personages are admirably sustained. That of Amadis is the true knight-errant. Of him it might be said in the language of Lobeira's time, that he was "true, amorous, sage, secret, bounteous, full of prowess, hardy, adventurous, and chivalrous." Don Galaor, the *Ranger* of knight-errantry, forms a good contrast to his brother. Lisuarte, even where swayed by the most unreasonable prejudices, shows as it were occasionally his natural goodness, so as always to prevent the total alienation of our good opinion and interest. The advantage given by the author to the vassals and dependants over the *Suzerain*, shows plainly a wish to please the numerous petty princes and barons at the expense of the liege lord. This may be remarked in many romances of Chivalry, particularly in those of Charlemagne and his Paladins. Even the inferior characters are well, though slightly, sketched. The presumption of the Emperor, the open gallantry and dry humour of old Grumedan the King's standard-bearer, the fidelity of Gandalin squire to Amadis, the professional manners of Master Helisabad the physician, with many others, are all in true style and costume.

The machinery introduced in Amadis, does not, as Mr. Southey observes, partake much of the marvellous. Arcalaus is more to be redoubted for his courage and cunning, than for his magic. Urganda is a fay similar to those which figure in the lays of Brittany, and, except her character of a prophetess, and some legerdemain tricks of transformation, has not much that is supernatural in her character. We differ *toto cælo* from Mr. Southey, in deriving this class of beings from classical antiquity: the nymphs and naiads of the Greeks and Romans in no shape meddled with magic; nor were they agents out of the limits of their own proper elements. Some faint traces of Greek superstition may be traced in the creed of the middle ages; but the Oriental genii and peris seem the prototype of the fairies of romance. The very word fairy is identified with the *peri* of the East, which, according to the enunciation of the Arabs or Saracens, from whom the Europeans probably derived the word, sounds *pheri*, the letter *h* not occurring in the Arabic alphabet. We do not mean, however, by any means, to adopt Mr. Wharton's system, which derives chivalry and romance exclusively from the East. On the contrary, although Eastern superstitions, and particularly that of the *fatæ*, *fadæ*, or *peri*, seem to have been adopted by the romancers, the system of chivalry itself appears of Northern origin; and romance is chiefly indebted for its subjects to the historical traditions of the Celtic tribes, although the minstrels, by whom they were celebrated, were of Gothic extraction.

It remains to make some observations on Mr. Southey's mode of

executing his translation, which appears to us marked with the hand of a master. The abridgments are judiciously made; and although some readers may think too much has still been retained, yet the objection will only occur to such as read merely for the story, without any attention to Mr. Southey's more important object of exhibiting a correct example of those romances, by which our forefathers were so much delighted, and from which we may draw such curious inferences respecting their customs, their morals, and their modes of thinking. The popular romance always preserves, to a certain degree, the manners of the age in which it was written. The novels of Fielding and Richardson are even already become valuable, as a record of the English manners of a former generation. How much, then, should we prize the volumes which describe those of the era of the victors of Cressy and Poitiers! The style of Mr. Southey is, in general, what he proposed, rather antique from the form of expression, than from the introduction of obsolete phrases. It has something of the scriptural turn, and much resembles the admirable translation of Froissart.\* Some words have inadvertently been used, which, to us, savour more of vulgarity than beseems the language of chivalry. Such are the phrases, "devilry," "Sir Knave," "Don False One," and some others. But we only mention these, to show that our general praise has not been inconsiderately bestowed.

Mr. Southey has made an apology for not translating the names, which convey some meaning in the original: "I have used Beltenebros, instead of the Beautiful Darkling, or the Fair Forlorn; Florestan instead of Forester; El Patin, instead of the Emperor Gosling; as we speak of Barbarossa, not Red-Beard; Boccanegra, not Black Muzzle; St Peter, not Stone the Apostle." We cannot help thinking this apology as unnecessary, as the examples are whimsical. Proper names are never rendered into a familiar dialect, but with a view of making them ridiculous; although they are sometimes translated into a less known language, to give them dignity. Thus, Mr. Wood is said to have been converted into *Dr. Lignum*, and to have gained by the exchange; while it is well known, that the Portuguese ambassador, Don Pedro Francisco Correo de Sylva, was chased from the court of Charles the Second, by the ridicule attached to the nickname of *Pierre du Bois*, into which his sounding title was rendered by the Duke of Buckingham:

\* He that would acquire an idea of the language of chivalry, cannot too often study the work of Bouchier Lord Berners. It is with pain we see a new translation of Froissart proposed to the public. It is impossible that the spirit of that excellent author can ever be so happily transfused into modern English, as in the sterling language of Lord Berners. The liberality of the proposed translator would surely be better employed in giving the public a new edition of the former translation, which is now become extremely scarce; and his learning and talents for literature would find no trivial employment in correcting mistakes, and collecting illustrations from contemporary writers.

and, surely, to talk of the Chief Consul *Good-part*, would be as absurd as the epithet would be inapplicable. As for Stone the Apostle, we have only heard of one bearing that name, who had also the fate of a prophet ; for his doctrines were no otherwise honoured in his own country, than by the notice of the King's Attorney-general.

In one respect, where we were entitled, from Mr. Southey's well-known poetical powers, to hope for great satisfaction, we have been most wofully disappointed. Instead of a version of the sonnets which occur in *Amadis*, executed by Mr. Southey, he has been pleased to present the public with what himself calls the *shadow of a shade*, the translation from Herberay's French into Anthony Munday's English. We are surprised that, in a book to which he places a name well known in the poetical world, he should admit such doggrel as,

" I lost my liberty, while I did gaze  
Upon those lights, which set me in a maze ,  
And of one free am now become a thrall.  
Put to such pain, thou serv'st thy friends withal :  
And yet I do esteem this pain a pleasure,  
Endured for thee, whom I love out of measure.  
Leonor, sweet rose, all other flowers excelling,  
For thee I feel strange thoughts in me rebelling." &c.

There is another piece of incomprehensible nonsense, beginning,

" Sith that the victory of right deserved,  
By wrong they do withhold, for which I served ;  
Now sith my glory thus hath had a fall,  
Glorious it is to end my life withal," &c.

The disgrace of this abominable stuff does not rest with poor *Anthony Now-Now*, whose talents could afford nothing better ; far less with the Spanish author, whose sonnets, though quaint, are not devoid of some merit ; but with Mr. Southey, whom we seriously exhort, in the name of poetry and common sense, to give us a decent translation in his next edition, and no more to shelter himself behind Munday for his verse, than he has done for his prose.

So much for the prose edition of *Amadis*, with the perusal of which we have been highly gratified.

We have already given it as our opinion, that the history of *Amadis* was, in its original state, a metrical romance. We remember, also, to have seen an Italian poem in Ottava Rima, called *Il Amadigi*, chiefly remarkable for the whimsical rule which the poet had imposed upon himself, of opening each canto with a description of the morning, and closing it with a description of the night. Mr. William Stewart Rose has now favoured the public with a poetical version of the First Book of *Amadis*, containing the birth and earlier adventures of the hero, and closing with his gaining possession of Oriana.

In our remarks upon this poem, we are more inclined to blame, in

some degree, Mr. Rose's plan, than to find fault with the execution, which appears to us, upon the whole, to be nearly as perfect as the plan admitted. Mr. Rose has indeed stated his pretensions so very modestly, that perhaps we are warranted in thinking that a culpable degree of diffidence has prevented him from assuming a tone of poetry more decided and animated.

"That the extract I now present to the public," says Mr. Rose, "is closely translated, I cannot venture to affirm. I have, I confess, attempted to introduce some of those trifling ornaments, which even the simplest style of poetry imperiously demands, and have, in many instances, altered the arrangement, and very much contracted the narration of the original : I trust, however, that I shall not be convicted of having, in my trifling deviations, introduced anything which is at variance with the spirit or tone of the celebrated romance."

With the alterations and abbreviations of Mr. Rose, we have not the most distant intention of quarrelling ; on the contrary, we think that his too close adherence to his original is the greatest defect in the book. Mr. Rose was not engaged in translating a poem, but in composing one ; the story of which was adopted from a prose work. We therefore do not conceive that he was obliged to limit himself to trifling ornaments or to the very simplest style of poetry. Even in modernizing ancient poetry, and that, too, the poetry of Chaucer, containing no small portion of fire, Dryden thought himself at liberty to heighten and enlarge the descriptions of his great master. But in his versions from prose pieces (in the tale of Theodore and Honoria, for example), he borrowed from Boccaccio only the outline of the story : the language, the conduct, and the sentiment, were all his own, and all in the highest strain of poetry. In like manner, we cannot see why Mr. Rose should have thought himself obliged to follow in any respect the prose of Herberay, while he himself was writing poetry. We can easily conceive that a prose romance may be converted into a metrical romance or epic poem ; but we cannot allow, that there ought to subsist betwixt two works, the style of which is so very different, the relations of a translation and an original work. In consequence of Mr. Rose's plan, it appears to us that his poem has suffered some injury. The necessity of following out minutely the prose narrative, occasions an occasional languor in the poem, for which simple and even elegant versification does not atone. We will, however, frankly own, that the casual circumstance of having perused Mr. Southey's prose work before the poem of Mr. Rose, may have had some influence upon our criticism ; since our curiosity being completely forestalled, we may have felt a diminished interest in the latter, from a cause not imputable to want of merit.

The avowed model upon which Mr. Rose has framed his *Amadis*, is the translation of Le Grand's *Fabliaux*, by Mr. Way ; and it is but

justice to state, that, in our opinion, he has fully attained what he proposed. An easy flow of verse, partaking more of the school of Dryden than of Pope, and chequered, occasionally, with ancient words and terms of chivalry, seems well calculated for the narration of romance and legendary tale. The following passage is a successful imitation of Chaucer

“ To tell, as meet, the costly feast's array,  
My tedious tale would hold a summer's day  
I let to sing who mid the courtly throng  
Did most excel in dance or sprightly song,  
Who first, who last, were seated on the dais,  
Who carped of love and arms in courtliest phrase,  
What many minstrels harp, what bratchets lie  
The feet beneath, what hawks were placed on high ”

We do not pretend to say, that Mr. Rose's poetry is altogether free from the commonplaces of the time. Such lines occur as these .

“ Nearer and nearer bursts the deafening crash,  
Athwart the lurid clouds red lightnings flash ”

But if Mr. Rose's plan prevented him from aspiring to the higher flights of poetry, he never, on the other hand, disgusts the reader by sinking into bathos. We are persuaded that the public would be interested in a modern version of some of our best metrical romances by Mr. Rose. We are the more certain of this, because we have read the notes to *Amadis* with very great satisfaction. We pay them a very great compliment, indeed, when we say, that they resemble, in lightness and elegance, though not in extent of information, those of George Ellis to Way's *Fabliaux*.

## THE DRAMA.

A DRAMA (we adopt Dr Johnson's definition, with some little extension) is a poem or fictitious composition in dialogue, in which the action is not related, but represented

A disposition to this fascinating amusement, considered in its rudest state, seems to be inherent in human nature. It is the earliest sport of children, to take upon themselves some fictitious character, and sustain it to the best of their skill, by such appropriate gestures and language as their youthful fancies suggest, and such dress and decorations as circumstances place within their reach. The infancy of nations is as prone to this pastime as that of individuals. When the horde emerges out of a nearly brutal state, so far as to have holidays, public sports, and general rejoicings, the pageant of their imaginary deities, or of their fabulous ancestors, is usually introduced as the most pleasing and interesting part of the show. But however general the predisposition to the assumption of fictitious character may be, there is an immeasurable distance betwixt the rude games in which it first displays itself and that polished amusement which is numbered among the fine arts, which poetry, music, and painting have vied to adorn, to whose service genius has devoted her most sublime efforts, while philosophy has stooped from her loftier task, to regulate the progress of the action, and give probability to the representation and personification of the scene.

The history of Greece—of that wonderful country whose days of glory have left such a never dying blaze of radiance behind them—the history of Greece affords us the means of correctly tracing the polished



and regulated Drama, the subject of severe rule, and the vehicle for expressing the noblest poetry, from amusements as rude in their outline, as the mimic sports of children or of savages. The history of the Grecian stage is that of the dramatic art in general. They transferred the Drama, with their other literature, to the victorious Romans, with whom it rather existed as a foreign than flourished as a native art. Like the other fine arts, the stage sunk under the decay of the empire, and its fall was accelerated by the introduction of the Christian religion. In the middle ages, dramatic representation revived, in the shape of the homely Mysteries and Moralities of our forefathers. The revival of letters threw light upon the scenic art, by making us acquainted with the pitch of perfection to which it had been carried by the genius of Greece. With this period commences the history of the modern stage, properly so called. Some general observations on the Drama, and on its present state in Britain, will form a natural conclusion to the Article.

The account which we have of the origin of Grecian theatrical representations, describes them as the fantastic orgies of shepherds and peasants, who solemnized the rights of Bacchus by the sacrifice of a goat, by tumultuous dances, and by a sort of masquerade, in which the actors were disguised like the ancient *Morrice-dancers* of England, or the *Guisards* of Scotland, who have not as yet totally disused similar revels. Instead of masks, their faces were stained with the lees of wine, and the songs and jests corresponded in coarseness to the character of the satyrs and fawns, which they were supposed to assume in honour of their patron Bacchus. Music, however, always formed a part of this rude festivity, and to this was sometimes added the recitations of an individual performer, who, possessed of more voice or talent than his companions, was able to entertain an audience for a few minutes by his own unaided exertions.

Out of such rude materials, Thespis is supposed to have been the first who framed something like an approach to a more regular entertainment. The actors under this, the first of theatrical managers, instead of running about wild among the audience, were exalted upon a cart, or upon a scaffold formed of boards laid upon trestles. In these improvements Thespis is supposed to have had the aid of one Susarion, whose efforts were more particularly directed to the comic Drama. But their fortunes have been unequal; for, while the name of Thespis is still united with everything dramatic, that of Susarion has fallen into oblivion, and is only known to antiquaries.

The Drama in Greece, as afterwards in Britain, had scarce begun to develope itself from barbarism ere, with the most rapid strides, it advanced towards perfection. Thespis and Susarion flourished about four hundred and forty or fifty years before the Christian era. The battle of Marathon was fought in the year 490 before Christ: and it

was upon *Æschylus*, one of the Athenian generals upon that memorable occasion, that Greece conferred the honoured title of the Father of Tragedy. We must necessarily judge of his efforts by that which he did, not by that which he left undone ; and if some of his regulations may sound strange in modern ears, it is but just to compare the state in which he found the Drama with that in which he left it.

*Æschylus* was the first who, availing himself of the invention of a stage by *Thespis*, introduced upon the boards a plurality of actors at the same time, and converted into action and dialogue, accompanied or relieved at intervals by the musical performance of the Chorus, the dull monologue of the Thespian orator. It was *Æschylus*, also, who introduced the deceptions of scenery ; stationary, indeed, and therefore very different from the decorations of our stage, but still giving a reality to the whole performance, which could not fail to afford pleasure to those who beheld, for the first time, an effort to surround the player, while invested with his theatrical character, with scenery which might add to the illusions of the representation. This was not all : A theatre, at first of wood, but afterwards of stone, circumscribed, while it accommodated the spectators, and reduced a casual and disorderly mob to the quality and civilization of a regular and attentive audience.

The most remarkable effect of the tragedy of *Æschylus*, was the introduction of the Chorus in a new character, which continued long to give a peculiar tone to the Grecian Drama, and still makes the broad and striking difference betwixt that original theatre, and those which have arisen in modern nations. The Chorus, who sung hymns in favour of *Bacchus*—the musical part, in short, of the entertainment—remained in the days of *Thespis* exactly as it had been in the rude village gambols which he had improved, the principal part of the dramatic entertainment. The intervention of monologue, or recitation, was merely a relief to the musicians, and a variety to the audience. *Æschylus*, while he assigned a part of superior consequence to the actor in his improved dialogue, new-modelled the Chorus, which custom still enjoined as a necessary and indispensable branch of the entertainment. They were no longer a body of vocal musicians, whose strains were as independent of what was spoken by the personages of the Drama, as those of our modern orchestra when performing betwixt the acts ; the Chorus assumed from this time a different and complicated character, which forms a marked peculiarity in the Grecian Drama, distinguishing it from the theatrical compositions of modern Europe.

The Chorus, according to this new model, was composed of a certain set of persons, priests, captive virgins, matrons, or others, usually of a solemn and sacred character, the contemporaries of the heroes who appeared on the stage, who remained upon the scene to celebrate in hymns set to music the events which had befallen the active persons

of the Drama ; to afford them alternately their advice or their sympathy ; and, at least, to moralize, in lyrical poetry, on the feelings to which their history and adventures, their passions and sufferings, gave rise. The Chorus might be considered as, in some degree, the representatives of the audience, or rather of the public, on whose great stage those events happen in reality, which are presented in the mimicry of the Drama. In the strains of the Chorus, the actual audience had those feelings suggested to them, as if by reflection in a mirror, which the events of the scene ought to produce in their own bosom ; they had at once before them the action of the piece, and the effect of that action upon a chosen band of persons, who, like themselves, were passive spectators, whose dignified strains pointed out the moral reflections to which the subject naturally gave rise. The chorus were led or directed by a single person of their number, termed the Coryphæus, who frequently spoke or sung alone. They were occasionally divided into two bands, who addressed and replied to each other. But they always preserved the character proper to them, of spectators, rather than agents in the Drama.

The number of the Chorus varied at different periods, often extending to fifty persons, and sometimes restricted to half that number ; and it is evident that the presence of so many persons on the scene, officiating as no part of the *dramatis personæ*, but rather as contemporary spectators, involved many inconveniences and inconsistencies. That which the hero, however agitated by passion, must naturally have suppressed within his own breast, or uttered in soliloquy, was thus necessarily committed to the confidence of fifty people, less or more. And when a deed of violence was to be committed, the helpless chorus, instead of interfering to prevent the atrocity to which the perpetrator had made them privy, could only, by the rules of the theatre, exhaust their sorrow and surprise in dithyrambics.

But still the union which Æschylus accomplished betwixt the didactic hymns of the Chorus, and the events which were passing upon the stage, was a most important improvement upon the earlier Drama. By this means, the two unconnected branches of the old Bacchanalian revels were combined together ; and we ought rather to be surprised that Æschylus ventured, while accomplishing such a union, to render the hymns sung by the Chorus subordinate to the action or dialogue, than that he did not take the bolder measure of altogether discarding that which, before his time, was reckoned the principal object of a religious entertainment.

The new theatre and stage of Athens was reared, as we have seen, under the inspection of Æschylus. He also introduced dresses in character for his principal actors, to which were added embellishments of a kind which mark the wide distinction betwixt the ancient and modern stage. The personal disguise which had formerly been

attained by staining the actor's face, was now, by what doubtless was considered as a high exertion of ingenuity, accomplished by the use of a mask, so painted as to represent the personage whom he represented. To augment the apparent awkwardness of this contrivance, the mouths of these masks were frequently fashioned like the extremity of a trumpet, which, if it aided the actor's voice to reach the extremity of the huge circuit to which he addressed himself, must still have made a ridiculous appearance upon the stage, had not the habits and expectations of the spectators been in a different tone from those of a modern audience. The use of the *cothurnus*, or buskin, which was contrived so as to give to the performer additional and unnatural stature, would have fallen under the same censure. But the ancient and modern theatres may be said to resemble each other only in name, as will appear from the following account of the Grecian stage, abridged from the best antiquaries.

The theatres of the Greeks were immensely large in comparison to ours ; and the audience sat upon rows of benches, rising above each other in due gradation. In form they resembled a horse-shoe. The stage occupied a platform, which closed in the flat end of the building, and was raised so high as to be on a level with the lowest row of benches. The central part of the theatre, or what we call the *pit*, instead of being filled with spectators, according to modern custom, was left for the occasional occupation of the Chorus, during those parts of their duty which did not require them to be nearer to the stage. This space was called the ORCHESTRA, and corresponded in some measure with the open space which, in the modern equestrian amphitheatres, is interposed betwixt the audience and the stage, for the display of feats of horsemanship. The delusion of the scene being thus removed to a considerable distance from the eye of the spectator, was heightened, and many of the objections offered to the use of the mask and the buskin were lessened, or totally removed. When the Chorus did not occupy the orchestra, they ranged themselves beside the THYMELE, a sort of altar, surrounded with steps, placed in front of their stage Orchestra. From this, as a post of observation, they watched the progress of the Drama, and to this point the actors turned themselves when addressing them. The solemn hymns and mystic dances of the Chorus, performed during their retreat into the orchestra, formed a sort of interludes, or interruptions of the action, similar in effect to the modern division into acts. But, properly speaking, there was no interruption of the representation from beginning to end. The piece was not, indeed, constantly progressive, but the illusion of the scene was always before the audience, either by means of the actors themselves, or of the Chorus. And the musical recitation and character of the dances traced by the Chorus in their interludes, were always in correspondence with the character of the piece, grave, majestic, and

melancholy, in tragedy, gay and lively, in comedy; and during the representation of satirical pieces, wild, extravagant, and bordering on buffoonery. The number of these interludes, or interruptions of the action, seems to have varied from three to six, or even more, at the pleasure of the author. The music was simple and inartificial, although it seems to have produced powerful effects on the audience. Two flute-players performed a prelude to the choral hymns, or directed the movement of the dances, which, in tragedy, were a solemn, slow, modulated succession of movements, very little resembling any thing termed dancing among the moderns.

The stage itself was well contrived for the purposes of the Greek Drama. The front was called the *LOGEUM*, and occupied the full width of the flat termination of the theatre, contracted, however, at each extremity, by a wall, which served to conceal the machinery necessary for the piece. The stage narrowed as it retired backwards, and the space so restricted in breadth was called the *PROSCENIUM*. It was terminated by a flat decoration, on which was represented the front of a temple, palace, or whatever else the poet had chosen for his scene. Suitable decorations appeared on the wings, as in our theatres. There were several entrances, both by the back scene and in front. These were not used indiscriminately, but so as to indicate the story of the piece, and render it more clear to apprehension. Thus, the persons of the Drama, who were supposed to belong to the palace or temple in the flat scene, entered from the side or the main door, as befitted their supposed rank; those who were inhabitants of the place represented, entered through a door placed at the side of the *Logeum*, while those supposed to come from a distance were seen to traverse the *Orchestra*, and to ascend the stage by a stair of communication, so that the audience were made spectators, as it were, of his journey. The *Proscenium* was screened by a curtain, which was withdrawn when the piece commenced. The decorations could be in some degree altered, so as to change the scene; though this, we apprehend, was seldom practised. But machinery for the ascent of phantoms, the descent of deities, and similar exhibitions, were as much in fashion among the Greeks as on our own modern stage; with better reason, indeed, for we shall presently see that the themes which they held most proper to the stage, called frequently for the assistance of these mechanical contrivances.

On the dress and costume of their personages, the Greeks bestowed much trouble and expense. It was their object to disguise, as much as possible, the mortal actor who was to represent a divinity or a hero, and while they hid his face, and augmented his height, they failed not to assign him a masque and dress in exact conformity to the popular idea of the character represented, so that, seen across the *orchestra*, he might appear the exact resemblance of *Hercules* or of *Agamemnon*.

The Grecians, but in particular the Athenians, became most passionately attached to the fascinating and splendid amusement which Æschylus thus regulated, which Sophocles and Euripides improved, and which all three, with other dramatists of inferior talents, animated by the full vigour of their genius. The delightful climate of Greece permitted the spectators to remain in the open air (for there was no roof to their huge theatres), for whole days, during which several plays, high monuments of poetical talent, were successively performed before them. The enthusiasm of their attention may be judged of by what happened during the representation of a piece written by Hegemon. It was while the Athenians were thus engaged, that there suddenly arrived the astounding intelligence of the total defeat of their army before Syracuse. The theatre was filled with the relations of those who had fallen; there was scarce a spectator who, besides sorrowing as a patriot, was not called to mourn a friend or relative. But, spreading their mantles before their faces, they commanded the representation to proceed, and, thus veiled, continued to give it their attention to the conclusion. National pride, doubtless, had its share in this singular conduct, as well as fondness for the dramatic art. Another instance is given of the nature and acuteness of their feelings, when the assembly of the people amerced Phrynicus with a fine of a thousand drachmae, because, in a comedy founded upon the siege of Miletos, he had agitated their feelings to excess, in painting an incident which Athens lamented as a misfortune dishonourable to her arms and her councils.

The price of admission was at first one *drachma*; but Pericles, desirous of propitiating the ordinary class of citizens, caused the entrance-money to be lowered to two *oboli*, so that the meanest Athenian had the ready means of indulging in this luxurious mental banquet. As it became difficult to support the expense of the stage, for which such cheap terms of admission could form no adequate fund, the same statesman, by an indulgence yet more perilous, caused the deficiency to be supplied from the treasure destined to sustain the expense of the war. It is a sufficient proof of the devotion of the Athenians to the stage, that not even the eloquence of Demosthenes could tempt them to forego this pernicious system. He touched upon the evil in two of his orations; but the Athenians were resolved not to forego the benefits of an abuse which they were aware could not be justified;—they passed a law making it death to touch that article of reformation.

It must not be forgotten, that the Grecian audience enjoyed the exercise of critical authority as well as of classical amusement at their theatre. They applauded and censured as at the present day, by clapping hands and hissing. Their suffrage, at those tragedies acted upon the solemn feast of Bacchus, adjudged a laurel crown to the most

successful dramatic author. This faculty was frequently abused : but the public, on sober reflection, seldom failed to be ashamed of such acts of injustice, and faithful, upon the whole, to the rules of criticism, evinced a fineness and correctness of judgment, which never descended to the populace of any other nation.

To this general account of the Grecian stage, it is proper to add some remarks on those peculiar circumstances, from which it derives a tone and character so different from that of the modern Drama—circumstances affecting at once its style of action, mode of decoration, and general effect on the feelings of the spectators.

The Grecian Drama, it must be remembered, derived its origin from a religious ceremony, and, amid all its refinement, never lost its devotional character, unless it shall be judged to have done so in the department of satirical comedy.

When the audience was assembled, they underwent a religious lustration, and the archons, or chief magistrates, paid their public adoration to Bacchus, still regarded as the patron of the theatrical art, and whose altar was always placed in the theatre.

The subject of the Drama was frequently religious. In tragedy, especially, Sophocles and Euripides, as well as Æschylus, selected their subjects from the exploits of the deities themselves, or of the demi-gods and heroes whom Greece accounted to draw an immediate descent from the denizens of Olympus, and to whom she paid nearly equal reverence. The object of the tragic poets was less to amuse and interest their audience by the history of the human heart, or soften them by the details of domestic distress, than to elevate them into a sense of devotion or submission, or to astound and terrify them by the history and actions of a race of beings before whom ordinary mortality dwindled into pigmy size. This the ancient dramatists dared to attempt ; and, what may appear still more astonishing to the mere English reader, this they appear in a great measure to have performed. Effects were produced upon their audience which we can only attribute to the awful impression communicated by the immediate presence of the Divinity. The emotions excited by the apparition of the Eumenides, or Furies, in Æschylus's tragedy of that name, so appalled the audience, that females are said to have lost the fruit of their womb, and children to have actually expired in convulsions of terror. These effects may have been exaggerated : but that considerable inconveniences occurred from the extreme horror with which this tragedy impressed the spectators, is evident from a decree of the magistrates, limiting the number of the Chorus, in order to prevent in future such tragical consequences. It is plain, that the feeling by which such impressions arose, must have been something very different from what the spectacle of the scene alone could possibly have produced. The mere sight of actors disguised in masks, suited to express the terrific

yet sublime features of an antique Medusa, with her hair entwined with serpents ; the wild and dishevelled appearance, the sable and bloody garments, the blazing torches, the whole apparatus, in short, or properties as they are technically called, with which the classic fancy of Æschylus could invest those terrific personages ; nay more, even the appropriate terrors of language and violence of gesture with which they were bodied forth, must still have fallen far short of the point which the poet certainly attained, had it not been for the intimate and solemn conviction of his audience that they were in the performance of an act of devotion, and, to a certain degree, in the presence of the deities themselves. It was this conviction, and the solemn and susceptible temper to which it exalted the minds of a large assembly, which prepared them to receive the electric shock produced by the visible representation of these terrible beings, in whom, whether as personifying the stings and terrors of an awakened conscience, or as mysterious and infernal divinities, the survivors of an elder race of deities, whose presence was supposed to strike awe even into Jove himself, the ancients ascribed the task of pursuing and punishing atrocious guilt.

It was in consistency with this connexion betwixt the Drama and religion of Greece that the principal Grecian tragedians thought themselves entitled to produce upon the stage the most sacred events of their mythological history. It might have been thought that, in doing so, they injured the effect of their fable and action, since suspense and uncertainty, so essential to the interests of a play, could not be supposed to exist where the immortal gods, beings controlling all others, and themselves uncontrolled, were selected as the agents in the piece. But it must be remembered that the synod of Olympus, from Jove downwards, were themselves but liminary deities, possessing, indeed, a certain influence upon human affairs, but unable to stem or divert the tide of fate or destiny, upon whose dark bosom, according to the Grecian creed, gods as well as men were embarked, and both sweeping downwards to some distant, yet inevitable termination of the present system of the universe, which should annihilate at once the race of divinity and of mortality. This awful catastrophe is hinted at not very obscurely by Prometheus, who, when chained to his rock, exults, in his prophetic view, in the destruction of his oppressor Jupiter ; and so far did Æschylus, in particular, carry the introduction of religious topics into his Drama, that he escaped with some difficulty from an accusation of having betrayed the Eleusinian mysteries.

Where the subject of the Drama was not actually taken from mythological history, and when the gods themselves did not enter upon the scene, the Grecian stage was, as we have already hinted, usually trod by beings scarcely less awful to the imagination of the audience ; the heroes, namely, of their old traditional history, to whom they attributed



an immediate descent from their deities,—a frame of body and mind surpassing humanity, and after death an exaltation into the rank of demi-gods.

It must be added that, even when the action was laid among a less dignified set of personages, still the altar was present on the stage ; incense frequently smoked ; and frequent prayers and obtestations of the Deity reminded the audience that the sports of the ancient theatre had their origin in religious observances. It is scarce necessary to state how widely the classical Drama, in this respect, differs in principle from that of the modern, which pretends to be nothing more than an elegant branch of the fine arts, whose end is attained when it supplies an evening's amusement, whose lessons are only of a moral description, and which is so far from possessing a religious character, that it has, with difficulty, escaped condemnation as a profane, dissolute, and antichristian pastime. From this distinction of principle there flows a difference of practical results, serving to account for many circumstances which might otherwise seem embarrassing

The ancients, we have seen, endeavoured by every means in their power, including the use of masks and of buskins, to disguise the person of the actor, and at the expense of sacrificing the expression of his countenance, and the grace, or at least the ease of his form, they removed from the observation of the audience every association which could betray the person of an individual player, under the garb of the deity or hero he was designed to represent. To have done otherwise would have been held indecorous, if not profane. It follows that, as the object of the Athenian and of the modern auditor in attending the theatre was perfectly different, the pleasure which each derived from the representation had a distinct source. Thus, for example, the Englishman's desire to see a particular character is intimately connected with the idea of the actor by whom it was performed. He does not wish to see Hamlet in the abstract, so much as to see how Kemble performs that character, and to compare him, perhaps, with his own recollections of Garrick in the same part. He comes prepared to study each variation of the actor's countenance, each change in his accentuation and deportment ; to note with critical accuracy the points which discriminate his mode of acting from that of others, and to compare the whole with his own abstract of the character. The pleasure arising from this species of critical investigation and contrast is so intimately allied with our ideas of theatrical amusement, that we can scarce admit the possibility of deriving much satisfaction from a representation sustained by an actor, whose personal appearance and peculiar expression of features should be concealed from us, however splendid his declamation, or however appropriate his gesture and action. But this mode of considering the Drama, and the delight which we derive from it, would have appeared to the Greeks a foolish and profane refinement

not very different in point of taste from the expedient of Snug the joiner, who intimated his identity by letting his natural visage be seen, under the mask of the lion which he represented. It was with the direct purpose of concealing the features of the individual actors, as tending to destroy the effect of his theatrical disguise, that the mask and buskin were first invented, and afterwards retained in use. The figure was otherwise so dressed as to represent the Deity or demi-god, according to the statue best known, and adored with most devotion by the Grecian public. The mask was, by artists who were eminent in the plastic art, so formed as to perfect the resemblance. Theseus, or Hercules, stood before the audience, in the very form with which painters and statuaries had taught them to invest the hero, and there was certainly thus gained a more complete scenic deception than could have been obtained in our present mode. It was aided by the distance interposed betwixt the audience and the stage; but, above all, by the influence of enthusiasm acting upon the congregated thousands, whose imaginations, equally lively and susceptible, were prompt to receive the impressions which the noble verse of their authors conveyed to their ears, and the living personification of their gods and demi-gods placed before their eyes.

It is scarcely necessary to add that, while these observations plead their apology for the mask and the buskin of the ancients, they leave where it stood before every objection to those awkward and unseemly disguises, considered in themselves, and without reference to the peculiar purpose and tendency of the ancient theatre. In fact, the exquisite pleasure derived from watching the eloquence of feature, and eye, which we admire in an accomplished actor, was not, as some have supposed, sacrificed by the ancients for the assumption of these disguises. They never did, and, according to the plan of their theatres, never could, possess that source of enjoyment. The circuit of the theatre was immense, and the eyes of the thousands whom it contained were so far removed from the stage, that, far from being able to enjoy the minute play of the actor's features, the mask and buskin were necessary to give distinction to his figure, and to convey all which the ancients expected to see, his general resemblance, namely, to the character he represented.

The style of acting, so far as it has been described to us, corresponded to the other circumstances of the representation. It affected gravity and sublimity of movement and of declamation. Rapidity of motion, and vivacity of action, seem to have been reserved for occasions of particular emotion; and that delicacy of by-play, as well as all the aid which look and slight gesture bring so happily to the aid of an impassioned dialogue, were foreign to their system. The actors, therefore, had an easier task than on the modern stage, since it is much more easy to preserve a tone of high and dignified declamation, than





to follow out the whirlwind and tempest of passion, in which it is demanded of the performer to be energetic without bombast, and natural without vulgarity.

The Grecian actors held a high rank in the republic, and those esteemed in the profession were richly recompensed. Their art was the more dignified, because the poets themselves usually represented the principal character in their own pieces—a circumstance which corroborates what we have already stated concerning the comparative inferiority of talents required in a Grecian actor, who was only expected to move with grace, and declaim with truth and justice. His disguise hid all personal imperfections, and thus a Grecian poet might aspire to become an actor, without that extraordinary and unlikely union of moral and physical powers, which would be necessary to qualify a modern dramatist to mount the stage in person, and excel at once as a poet and as an actor.

It is no part of our present object to enter into any minute examination of the comparative merits of the three great tragedians of Athens, *Æschylus*, *Sophocles*, and *Euripides*. Never, perhaps, did there arise, within so short a space, such a succession of brilliant talents. *Sophocles* might, indeed, be said to be the contemporary of both his rivals, for his youthful emulation was excited by the success of *Æschylus*, and the eminence of his latter years was disturbed by the rivalry of *Euripides*, whom, however, he survived. To *Æschylus*, who led the van in dramatic enterprise, as he did in the field of Marathon, the sanction of antiquity has ascribed unrivalled powers over the realms of astonishment and terror. At his summons, the mysterious and tremendous volume of destiny, in which are inscribed the doom of gods and men, seemed to display its leaves of iron before the appalled spectators; the more than mortal voices of Deities, Titans, and departed Heroes, were heard in awful conference; heaven bowed, and its divinities descended; earth yawned, and gave up the pale spectres of the dead; and the yet more undefined and grisly forms of those infernal deities who struck horror into the gods themselves. All this could only be dared and done by a poet of the highest order, confident, during that early age of enthusiasm, that he addressed an audience prompt to kindle at the heroic scene which he placed before them. It followed almost naturally, from his character, that the dramas of *Æschylus*, though full of terrible interest, should be deficient of grace and softness; that his sublime conciseness should deviate sometimes into harshness and obscurity; that, finding it impossible to sustain himself at the height to which he had ascended, he should sometimes drop, "fluttering his pinions vain," into great inequalities of composition; and, finally, that his plots should appear rude and inartificial, contrasted with those of his successors in the dramatic art. Still, however, *Æschylus* led not only the way in the noble career of the Grecian

drama, but outstripped, in point of sublimity at least, those by whom he was followed.

Sophocles, who obtained from his countrymen the title of the *Bee* of Attica, rivalled Æschylus when in the possession of the stage, and obtained the first prize. His success occasioned the veteran's retreat to Sicily, where he died, commanding that his epitaph should make mention of his share in the victory of Marathon, but should contain no allusion to his dramatic excellencies. His more fortunate rival judiciously avoided the dizzy and terrific path which Æschylus had trod with so firm and daring a step. It was the object of Sophocles to move sorrow and compassion rather than to excite indignation and terror. He studied the progress of action with more attention than Æschylus, and excelled in that modulation of the story by which interest is excited at the beginning of a drama, maintained in its progress, and gratified at its conclusion. His subjects are also of a nature more melancholy and less sublime than those of his predecessors. He loved to paint heroes rather in their forlorn than in their triumphant fortunes, aware that the contrast offered new sources of the pathetic to the author. Sophocles was the most fortunate of the Greek tragedians. He attained the age of ninety-one years; and in his eightieth, to vindicate himself from a charge of mental imbecility, he read to the judges his *Œdipus Coloneus* the most beautiful, at least the most perfect, of his tragedies. He survived Euripides, his formidable rival, of whom, also, we must speak a few words.

It is observed by Schlegel, that the tone of the tragedies of Euripides approaches more nearly to modern taste than to the stern simplicity of his predecessors. The passion of love predominates in his pieces, and he is the first tragedian who paid tribute to that sentiment which has been too exclusively made the moving cause of interest on the modern stage,—the first who sacrificed to

“Cupid, king of gods and men”

The dramatic use of this passion has been purified in modern times, by the introduction of that tone of feeling, which, since the age of Chivalry, has been a principal ingredient in heroic affection. This was unknown to the ancients, in whose society females, generally speaking, held a low and degrading place, from which few individuals emerged, unless those who aspired to the talents and virtues proper to the masculine sex. Women were not forbidden to become competitors for the laurel or oaken crown offered to genius and to patriotism; but antiquity held out no myrtle wreath, as a prize for the domestic virtues peculiar to the female character. Love, therefore, in Euripides, does not always breathe purity of sentiment, but is stained with the mixture of violent and degrading passions. This, however, was the fault of the age, rather than of the poet, although he is generally represented

as an enemy of the female sex ; and his death was ascribed to a judgment of Venus.

" When blood-hounds met him by the way,  
And monsters made the bard their prey."

This great dramatist was less happy than Sophocles in the construction of his plots ; and, instead of the happy expedients by which his predecessor introduces us to the business of the drama, he had too often recourse to the mediation of a prologue, who came forth to explain, in detail, the previous history necessary to understand the piece.

Euripides is also accused of having degraded the character of his personages, by admitting more alloy of human weakness, folly, and vice, than was consistent with the high qualities of the heroic age. Æschylus, it was said, transported his audience into a new and more sublime race of beings ; Sophocles painted mankind as they ought to be, and Euripides as they actually are. Yet the variety of character introduced by the latter tragedian, and the interest of his tragedies, must always attract the modern reader, coloured as they are by a tone of sentiment, and by his knowledge of the business, rules, and habits, of actual life, to which his predecessors, living as they did, in an imaginary and heroical world of their own, appear to have been strangers. And although the judgment of the ancients assigned the pre-eminence in tragedy to Æschylus or Sophocles, yet Euripides has been found more popular with posterity than either of his two great predecessors.

The division betwixt tragedy and comedy, for both sprung from the same common origin, the feasts, namely, in honour of Bacchus, and the disguise adopted by his worshippers, seems to have taken place gradually, until the jests and frolics, which made a principal part of these revels, were found misplaced when introduced with graver matter, and were made by Susarion, perhaps the subject of a separate province of the Drama. The Grecian comedy was divided into the ancient, the middle, and the modern, style of composition.

The ancient and original comedy was of a kind which may, at first sight, appear to derogate from the religious purposes which we have pointed out as the foundations of the Drama. They frequently turn upon parodies, in which the persons and adventurers of those gods and heroes who were the sublime subjects of the tragic Drama, are introduced for the purpose of buffoon-sport, and ridicule, as in Carey's modern farces of *Midas* and the *Golden Pippin*. Hercules appears in one of those pieces astonishing his host by an extravagant appetite, which the cook in vain attempts to satiate, by placing before him, in succession, all the various dishes which the ancient kitchen afforded. In another comedy, Bacchus (in whose honour the solemnity was instituted) is brought in only to ridicule his extreme cowardice.

At other times, allowing a grotesque fancy its wildest range, the early comic authors introduced upon the stage animals, and even inanimate things, as part of their *dramatis personæ*, and embodied forth on the stage, the fantastic imaginations of Lucian in his *True History*. The golden age was represented in the same ridiculous and bizarre mode of description as the *Pays de la Cocaigne* of the French minstrels, or the popular ideas of *Lubberland* in England; and the poets furnished kingdoms of birds and worlds in the moon.

Had the only charm of these entertainments consisted in the fantastic display with which the eyes of the spectators were regaled at the expense of the over-excited imagination of the poet, they would soon have fallen into disuse; for the Athenians were too acute and judicious critics, to have been long gratified with mere extravagance. But these grotesque scenes were made the medium for throwing the most bold and daring ridicule upon the measures of the stage, upon the opinions of individuals, and upon the religion of the country.

This propensity to turn into ridicule that which is most serious and sacred, had probably its origin in the rude gambols of the silvan deities who accompanied Bacchus, and to whose petulant and lively demeanour rude jest was a natural accompaniment. The audience, at least the more ignorant part of them, saw these parodies with pleasure, which equalled the awe they felt at the performance of the tragedies, whose most solemn subjects were thus burlesqued; nor do they appear to have been checked by any sense that their mirth was profane. In fact, when the religion of a nation comes to consist chiefly in the practice of a few unmeaning ceremonies, it is often found that the populace, with whatever inconsistency, assume the liberty of profaning them by grotesque parodies, without losing their reverence for the superstitions which they thus vilify. Customs of a like tendency were common in the middle ages. The festival of the Ass in France, of the Boy-Bishop in England, of the Abbot of Unreason in Scotland, and many other popular practices of the same kind, exhibited, in countries yet Catholic, daring parodies of the most sacred services and ceremonies of the Roman Church. And as these were practised openly, and under authority, without being supposed to shake the people's attachment to the rites which they thus ridiculed, we cannot wonder that similar profanities were well received among the Pagans, whose religion sat very loosely upon them, and who professed no fixed or necessary articles of faith.

It is probable that, had the old Grecian comedy continued to direct its shafts of ridicule only against the inhabitants of Olympus, it would not have attracted the coercion of the magistracy. But its kingdom was far more extensive, and the poets, claiming the privilege of laying their opinions on public affairs before the people in this shape, Cratinus, Eupolis, and particularly Aristophanes, a daring, powerful, and appa-



rently unprincipled writer, converted comedy into an engine for assailing the credit and character of private individuals, as well as the persons and political measures of those who administered the state. The doctrines of philosophy, the power of the magistrate, the genius of the poet, the rites proper to the Deity, were alternately made the subject of the most uncompromising and severe satire. It was soon discovered, that the more directly personal the assault could be made, and the more revered or exalted the personage, the greater was the malignant satisfaction of the audience, who loved to see wisdom, authority, and religious reverence, brought down to their own level, and made subjects of ridicule by the powers of the merciless satirist. The use of the mask enabled Aristophanes to render his satire yet more pointedly personal ; for, by forming it so as to imitate, probably with some absurd exaggeration, the features of the object of his ridicule, and by imitating the dress and manner of the original, the player stepped upon the stage, a walking and speaking caricature of the hero of the night, and usually placed in some ludicrous position, amidst the fanciful and whimsical chimeras with which the scene was peopled.

In this manner, Aristophanes ridiculed with equal freedom Socrates, the wisest of the Athenians, and Cleon, the demagogue, when at the height of his power. As no one durst perform the latter part, for fear of giving offence to one so powerful, the author acted Cleon himself, with his face smeared with the lees of wine. Like the satire of Rabelais, the political and personal invective of Aristophanes was mingled with a plentiful allowance of scurril and indecent jests, which were calculated to ensure a favourable reception from the bulk of the people. He resembles Rabelais also, in the wild and fanciful fictions which he assumes as the vehicle of his satire ; and his comedy of *The Birds* may even have given hints to Swift, when, in order to contrast the order of existing institutions with those of a Utopian and fantastic fairy land, he carries Gulliver among giants and pigmies. Yet though his indecency, and the offensive and the indiscriminate scurrility of his satire, deserve censure ; though he merits the blame of the wise for his attack upon Socrates, and of the learned for his repeated and envenomed assaults upon Euripides, Aristophanes has nevertheless added one deathless name to the deathless period in which he flourished ; and, from the richness of his fancy, and gaiety of his tone, has deserved the title of the Father of Comedy. When the style of his sarcasm possessed the rareness of novelty, it was considered of so much importance to the state, that a crown of olive was voted to the poet, as one who had taught Athens the defects of her public men. But unless angels were to write satires, ridicule cannot be considered as the test of truth. The temptation to be witty is just so much the more resistless, that the author knows he will get no thanks for suppressing the jest which rises to his pen. As the public becomes used to this

new and piquant fare, fresh characters must be sacrificed for its gratification. Recrimination adds commonly to the contest, and those who were at first ridiculed out of mere wantonness of wit, are soon persecuted for resenting the ill usage; until literature resembles an actual personal conflict, where the victory is borne away by the strongest and most savage, who deals the most desperate wounds with the least sympathy for the feeling of his adversary.

The ancient comedy was of a character too licentious to be long tolerated. Two or three decrees having been in vain passed, in order to protect the citizen against libels of this poignant description, the ancient comedy was finally proscribed by that oligarchy, which assumed the sway over Athens, upon the downfall of the popular government towards the end of the Peloponnesian war. By orders of these rulers, Anaxander, an actor, was punished capitally, for parodying a line of Euripides, so as to infer a slight of the government. He was starved to death, to which, as an appropriate punishment, the public has since his time often indirectly condemned both actors and dramatists. Aristophanes, who was still alive, bowed to the storm, and relinquished the critical and satirical scourge, which he had hitherto exercised in the combined capacity of satirist, reformer, and reviewer; and the use of the Chorus was prohibited to comic authors, as it seems to have been in their stanzas chiefly that the offensive satire was invested. To this edict Horace alludes in the well-known lines:

"*Successit vetus his comedia, none sine multa  
Laude, sed in vitium libertas excidit, et vim  
Dignam lege regi: lex est accepta: Chorusque  
Turpiter obtulit, sublato jure nocendi.*"\*

In the middle comedy, Thalia and her votaries seemed to have retraced their steps, and, avoiding personal satire, resorted once more to general subjects of burlesque raillery. We learn from history, real or fabulous, or from the works of the elder poets, that these plays had the fanciful wildness without the personal satire of the ancient comedy, for the authors were obliged to take care that there was no "offence" in their pleasantry. At most they only ventured to touch on matters of interest in the way of inuendo, under feigned titles and oblique hints, and had no longer the audacity to join men's vices or follies to their names. Aristophanes recast several of his pieces in this manner. But the same food, without the poignant seasoning to which the audience had been accustomed, palled on their taste, and this cast of pieces soon

\* The ancient comedy next play'd its part,  
Well-famed, at first, for spirit and for art;  
But Liberty o'erleaping decent awe,  
Satiric rage required restraint from law.  
The edict spoke, —dishonour'd silence bound  
The Chorus, and forbade their ancient right to wound

gave place to that which the ancients called the New Comedy, so successfully cultivated by Menander and others.

Notwithstanding what modern critics have said to the contrary, and particularly the ingenious Schlegel, the new tone which comedy thus assumed, seems more congenial to true taste as well as to public decorum, and even to the peace and security of the community, than that of Aristophanes, whose satiric wit, like a furious bull, charged upon his countrymen without respect or distinction, and tossed and gored whatever he met in his way.

The new comedy had for its object the ludicrous incidents of private life,—*celebrare domestica facta*, says Horace,—to detail those foibles, follies, and whimsical accidents, which are circumstances material and serious to the agents themselves, but, as very usually happens on the stage of the world, matters only of ludicrous interest to the on-lookers. The new comedy admitted also many incidents of a character not purely ludicrous, and some which, calling forth pathetic emotion, approached more nearly to the character of tragedy than had been admitted in the ancient comedies of Aristophanes, and in this rather resembled what the French have called *Tragédie Bourgeoise*. It is scarce necessary to remark, that the line cannot be always distinctly drawn betwixt the subjects which excite mirth and those which call forth sympathy. It often happens that the same incident is at once affecting and ludicrous, or admits of being presented alternately in either point of view. In a Drama, also, which treats of the faults and lighter vices, as well as of the follies of mankind, it is natural that the author should sometimes assume the high tone of the moralist. In these cases, to use the language of Horace, comedy exalts her voice, and the offended father, the pantaloons of the piece, swells into sublimity of language. A pleasant species of composition was thus attained, in which wit and humour were relieved by touches both of sentiment and moral instruction. The new comedy, taken in this enlarged point of view, formed the introduction to the Modern Drama; but it was neither so comprehensive in its plan, nor so various in character and interest.

The form which the Greeks, and in imitation of them the Romans, adopted, for embodying their comic effusions, was neither extended nor artificial. To avoid the charge of assaulting, or perhaps the temptation to attack private persons, the actors in their drama were rather painted as personifications of particular classes of society, than living individual characters. The list of these personages was sufficiently meagre. The principal character, upon whose devices and ingenuity the whole plot usually turns, is the Geta of the piece, a witty, roguish, insinuating, and malignant slave, the confidant of a wild and extravagant son, whom he aids in his pious endeavours to cheat a suspicious, severe, and griping father. When to these three are added, a wily courtesan, a procuress, a stolen virgin, who is generally a mute or nearly

such, we have all the stock-characters which are proper to the classic comedy. Upon this limited scale of notes the ancients rung their changes, relieving them occasionally, however, by the introduction of a boastful soldier, a boorish clown, or a mild and good-natured old man, to contrast with the irascible Chremes of the piece, the more ordinary representative of old age.

The plot is in general as simple as the cast of the characters. A father loses his child, who falls into the hands of a procuress or slave-merchant. The efforts of the youth, who falls in love with this captive, to ransom her from her captivity, are seconded by the slave, who aids him in the various devices necessary to extort from his father the funds necessary for the purchase, and their tricks form the principal part of the intrigue. When it is necessary that the play shall close, the discovery of the girl's birth takes place, and the young couple are married. The plots are, indeed, sometimes extended or enlarged by additional circumstances, but very seldom by any novelty of character or variety of general form.

It is a necessary consequence, that the ancient comic authors were confined within a very narrow compass. The vast and inexhaustible variety of knavery, folly, affectation, humour, &c. &c., as mingled with each other, or as modified by difference of age, sex, temper, education, profession, and habit of body, are all within the royalty of the modern comic dramatist, and he may summon them up under what limitations and in what circumstances he pleases, to play their parts in his piece. The ancients were much more limited in their circle of materials, and, perhaps, we must look for the ruling cause, once more, in the great size of their theatres, and to the use of the mask ; which, though it easily presented the general or generic character of the personage introduced, was incapable of the endless variety which can be given to ridicule of a more minute, refined, and personal kind, by the flexible organs of a modern actor.

But besides this powerful reason for refraining from any attempt to draw characters distinguished by peculiar habits, there is much reason to think that the mode of life pursued by the ancient Athenians was unfavourable to the formation of whimsical, original, or eccentric characters. Citizens of the same state, they lived much together, and the differences of ranks did not make the same distinction in taste and manners as in modern Europe. The occupation was also the same. They were all public men, and had a common interest in the management of the state ; and it probably followed, that, in men whose thoughts and pursuits were all bent the same way, the same general similarity of manners might be found to exist, which is remarked in those who follow the same profession. The differences of youth and age, of riches and poverty, of good or bad temper, &c. must have been much modified in Attica, where all free citizens were, to a certain degree, on a level,—

discussed the same topics of state, and gave the same vote to forward them—enjoyed without restriction the same public amusements,—and where the same general cast of manners might descend to the lowest of the citizens, for the very reason that even a poor herb-woman understands the delicacy of the Attic dialect so perfectly, as to distinguish a stranger by the first words he addressed to her.

The Chorus, silenced, as we have seen, owing to the license of the old comedy, made no appendage to that which was substituted in its place. The exhibition of the Grecian comedy did not, in other respects, in so far as we know, materially differ from that of the tragedy. Instead of the choral interludes, the representation was now divided, by intervals of cessation, into acts, as upon the modern stage. And the number *five* seems to have been fixed upon as the most convenient and best adapted for the purposes of representation. The plot, as we have seen, and the distinct and discriminated specification of character, were, in either case, subordinate considerations to the force of style and composition. It follows, of consequence, that we can better understand and enjoy the tragedies than the comedies of the ancients. The circumstances which excite sublime or terrific sensations are the same, notwithstanding the difference of age, country and language. But comic humour is of a character much more evanescent. The force of wit depends almost entirely upon time, circumstance, and manners; in so much, that a jest which raises inextinguishable laughter in a particular class of society appears flat or disgusting if uttered in another. It is, therefore, no wonder that the ancient comedy, turning upon manners so far removed from our own time, should appear to us rather dull and inartificial. The nature of the intercourse between the sexes in classic times was also unfavourable for comedy. The coquette, the fine lady, the romp, all those various shades of the female character, which occupy so many pleasant scenes on the modern stage, were totally unknown to ancient manners. The wife of the ancient comedy was a mere household drudge, the vassal, not the companion of an imperious husband. The young woman, whose beauty is the acting motive of the intrigue, never evinces the slightest intellectual property of any kind. And the only female character admitting of some vivacity, is that of the courtesan, whose wit as well as her charms, appear to have been professional.

After subtracting the large field afforded by female art or caprice, female wit, or folly, or affection, the realm of the ancient comedy will appear much circumscribed; and we have yet to estimate a large deduction to be made on account of the rust of antiquity, and the total change of religion and manners. It is no wonder, therefore, that the wit of Plautus and Terence should come forth diminished in weight and substance, after having been subjected to the alembic of modern criticism. That which survives the investigation, however, is of a solid

and valuable character. If these Dramas do not entertain us with a display of the specific varieties of character, they often convey maxims evincing a deep knowledge of human passion and feeling; and are so admirably adapted to express, in few and pithy words, truths which it is important to remember, that even the Apostle Paul himself has not disdained to quote a passage from a Grecian dramatist. The situation, also, of their personages is often truly comic; and the modern writers who have borrowed their ideas, and arranged them according to the taste of their own age, have been indebted to the ancients for the principal causes of their success.

Having dwelt thus long upon the Grecian Drama, we are entitled to treat with conciseness that of Rome, which, like the other fine arts, that people, rather martial than literary, copied from their more ingenious neighbours.

The Romans were not, indeed, without a sort of rude dramatic representation of their own, of the same nature with that which, as we have already noticed, usually rises in an early period of society. These were called *Fabulæ Atellanæ*; farces, for such they were, which took their name from *Atella*, a town belonging to the *Osci* in Italy. They were performed by the Roman youth, who used to attack each other with satirical couplets during the intervals of some rude game in which they seem to have represented the characters of fabulous antiquity. But 361 years before the Christian era, the Romans, in the time of a great pestilence, as we learn from Livy, introduced a more regular species of theatrical entertainment, in order to propitiate the deities by a solemn exhibition of public games; after which, what had hitherto been matter of mere frolic and amusement, assumed, according to the historian, the appearance of a professional art; and the Roman youth, who had hitherto appeared as amateur performers, gave up the stage to regular actors.

These plays continued, however, to be of a very rude structure, until the Grecian stage was transplanted to Rome. Livius Andronicus, by birth a Grecian, led the way in this improvement, and is accounted her first dramatist.

Seneca, the philosopher, is the only Roman tragedian whose works have reached our time. His tragedies afford no very favourable specimen of Roman art. They are in the false taste which succeeded the age of Augustus, and debased the style of composition in that of Nero; bombastic, tedious, and pedantic; treating, indeed, of Grecian subjects, but not with Grecian art.

By a singular contrast, although we have lost the more valuable tragedies of Rome, we have been compelled to judge of the new Greek comedy, through the medium of the Latin translations. Of Menander we have but a few fragments, and our examples of his Drama are de-

rived exclusively from Plautus and Terence. Of these, the former appears the more original, the latter the more elegant author. The comedies of Plautus are much more connected with manners,—much more full of what may be termed drollery and comic situation,—and are believed to possess a greater portion of Roman character. The Romans, indeed, had two species of comedy, the *Palliata*, where the scene and dress were Grecian; the *Togata*, where both were Roman. But besides this distinction, even the *Mantled*, or Grecian comedy, might be more or less of a Roman cast; and Plautus is supposed to have infused a much stronger national tone into his plays than can be traced in those of Terence. They are also of a ruder cast, and more extravagant, retaining, perhaps, a larger portion of the rough horse-play peculiar to the *Fabula Atellana*. Terence, on the contrary, is elegant, refined, and sententious; decorous and regular in the construction of his plots; exhibiting more of wit in his dialogue, than of comic force in his situations; grave often and moral; sometimes even pathetic; and furnishing, upon the whole, the most perfect specimen of the Grecian comedy, both in action and character.

The alterations which the Romans made in the practice of the theatrical art do not seem to have been of great consequence. One circumstance, however, deserves notice. The orchestra, or, as we should say, the pit of the theatre, was no longer left vacant for the occasional occupation of the Chorus, but was filled with the senators, knights, and other more respectable citizens. The stage was thus brought more near to the eye of the higher class of the audience. It would also seem that the theatres were smaller; for we read of two so constructed, that each turned upon a pivot, so that, when placed back to back, they were separate theatres, yet were capable of being wheeled round, with all the audience, so as to bring their oblong ends together, then forming a single amphitheatre, in which the games of the circus succeeded to dramatic representation. It is not easy to conceive the existence of such machinery; but the story, at any rate, seems to show, that their theatres must have been greatly smaller than those of Greece, to admit the supposition of such an evolution as being in any degree practicable. This diminution in the size of the house, and the occupation of the orchestra by the most dignified part of the audience, may have afforded a reason why masks were, at least occasionally, disused on the Roman stage. That they were sometimes disused is certain; for Cicero mentions Roscius Gallus as using a mask to conceal a deformity arising from the inequality of his eyes, which implies plainly that other comedians played with their faces disclosed. It is therefore probable, that the imperfections of the mask were felt, so soon as the distance was diminished between the performer and the spectators; and we may hazard a conjecture, that this disguise was first laid aside in the smaller theatres.

But the principal change introduced by the Romans into the Drama, and which continues to effect it in every country of Europe, respected the *status* or rank of the actors in society. We have seen that Athens, enthusiastic in her attachment to the fine arts, held no circumstances degrading which were connected with them. Æschylus and Sophocles were soldiers and statesmen, yet lost nothing in the opinion of their countrymen, by appearing on the public stage. Euripides, who was also a person of consequence, proved that "love esteems no office mean;" for he danced in a female disguise in his own Drama, and that not as the Princess Nauticlea, but as one of her handmaidens, or, in modern phrase, as a *figurante*. The Grecians, therefore, attached no dishonour to the person of the actor, nor esteemed that he who contributed to giving the amusement of the theatre, was at all degraded beneath those who received it. It was otherwise in Rome. The contempt which the Romans entertained for players might be founded partly upon their confounding this elegant amusement with the games of the Circus and amphitheatre, performed by gladiators and slaves, the meanest, in short, of mankind. Hence, to use the words of St. Augustin, "the ancient Romans, accounting the art of stage-playing and the whole scene infamous, ordained that this sort of men should not only want the honour of other citizens, but also be disfranchised and thrust out of their tribe, by a legal and disgraceful censure, which the censors were to execute; because they would not suffer their vulgar sort of people, much less their senators, to be defamed, disgraced, or defiled with stage-players;" which act of theirs he styles "an excellent true Roman prudence, to be enumerated among the Roman's praises."

Accordingly, an edict of the prætor stigmatized as infamous all who appeared on the stage, either to speak or act; but it is remarkable that from this general proscription the Roman youth were excepted; and they continued to enact the *Fabulæ Atellanæ*, namely, the farces or drolleries of ancient Italian origin, without incurring any stigma. This exception seems to indicate, that the edict originated in the national pride of the Romans, and their contempt for Grecian literature, and for foreigners of every description. Under any other view it is impossible they should have preferred the actors in these coarse farces, who, by the by, are supposed to have been the originals of no less persons than Harlequin and Punchinello, to those who possessed taste and talents sufficient to execute the masterly scenes, borrowed from the Grecian Drama.

Injustice, however,—and we call that law unjust which devotes to general infamy any profession of which it nevertheless tolerates the practice,—is usually inconsistent. Several individual play-actors in Rome rose to high public esteem, and to the enjoyment of great wealth. Roscius was the friend and companion of Piso and of Sylla,



and, what was still more to his credit, of Cicero himself, who thus eulogises the scenic art, while commemorating the merits of his deceased friend :—" *Quis nostrum tam animo agresti ac duro fuit, ut Roscii morte nuper non commoveretur ; qui quum esset senex mortuus, tamen, propter excellentem artem ac venustatem, videbatur omnino mori non debuisse ?*"

Paris, another Roman actor, reached a height of celebrity as distinguished as Roscius, and exercised, as many of his profession have since done, an arbitrary authority over the unfortunate dramatic authors. It is recorded by the satirist, that Statius the epic poet might have starved, had he not given up to this favourite of the public, upon his own terms doubtless, the manuscript of an unacted performance. Paris was put to death by Domitian out of jealousy.

If the actors rose to be persons of importance in Rome, the dramatic critics were not less so. They had formed a code of laws for the regulation of dramatic authors to which the great names of Aristotle and Horace both contributed their authority. But these will be more properly treated of when we come to mention the adoption of the ancient regulations by the French stage.

Having thus gone hastily through some accounts of the ancient stage, from its rise in Greece to its transportation to Rome, we have only to notice the circumstances under which it expired.

Christianity from its first origin was inimical to the institution of the stage. The Fathers of the Church inveigh against the profaneness and immodesty of the theatre. In the treatise of Tertullian, *De Spectaculis*, he has written expressly upon the subject. The various authorities on this head have been collected and quoted by the enemies of the stage, from Prynne down to Collier. It ought, however, to be noticed, that their exprobration of the theatre is founded, first, upon its origin, as connected with heathen superstition ; and secondly, on the beastly and abominable license practised in the pantomimes, which, although they made no part of the regular Drama, were represented nevertheless in the same place, and before the same audience. "We avoid your shows and games," says Tertullian, "because we doubt the warrant of their origin. They savour of superstition and idolatry, and we dislike the entertainment, as abhorring the heathen religion on which it is founded." In another place he observes, the temples were united to theatres, in order that superstition might patronise debauchery, and that they were dedicated to Bacchus and to Venus, the confederate deities of lust and intemperance.

It was not only the connexion of the theatre with heathen superstition, that offended the primitive Church ; but also the profligacy of some of the entertainments which were exhibited. There cannot be much objected to the regular Roman Dramas in this particular, since

even Mr. Collier allows them to be more decorous than the British stage of his own time ; but, as we have already hinted, in the *Ludi Scenici*, the intrigues of the gods and the heroes were represented upon the stage with the utmost grossness. These obscene and scandalous performances thus far coincided with the Drama, that they were acted in the same theatres, and in honour of the same deities, and both were subjected to the same sweeping condemnation. They were not, however, absolutely or formally abolished, even when Christianity became the religion of the State. Tertullian and St. Austin both speak of the scenic representations of their own day, under the distinct characters of tragedy and comedy ; and although condemned by the Church, and abhorred by the more strict Christians, there is little doubt that the ancient theatre continued to exist, until it was buried under the ruins of the Roman Empire

### THE MODERN DRAMA.

The same propensity to fictitious personification, which we have remarked as common to all countries, introduced, during the dark ages, a rude species of Drama into most of the nations of Europe. Like the first efforts of the ancients in that art, it had its foundation in religion ; with this great difference, that as the rites of Bacchus before, and even after the improvements introduced by Thespis, were well enough suited to the worship of such a deity, the religious Dramas, mysteries, or whatever other name they assumed, were often so unworthy of the Christian religion, on which they were founded, that their being tolerated can be attributed only to the gross ignorance of the laity, and the cunning of the Catholic priesthood, who used them, with other idle and sometimes indecorous solemnities, as one means of amusing the people's minds, and detaining them in contented bondage to their spiritual superiors.

In the Empire of the East, religious exhibitions of a theatrical character appear to have been instituted about the year 990, by Theophylact, patriarch of Constantinople, with the intention (Warton surmises) of weaning the minds of the people from the Pagan revels, by substituting Christian spectacles, partaking of the same spirit of license. His contemporaries give him little credit for his good intentions. "Theophylact," says Cedrenus, as translated by Warton, "introduced the practice, which prevails to this day, of scandalizing God and the memory of his saints, on the most splendid and popular festivals, by indecent and ridiculous songs, and enormous shoutings, even in the midst of those sacred hymns which we ought to offer to divine grace for the salvation of our souls. But he having connected a company of base fellows, and placing over them one Euthynicus surnamed Casnes, whom he also appointed the superintendent of his church, admitted into the sacred service diabolical dances, exclamations of

ribaldry, and ballads borrowed from the streets and brothels."—The irregularities of the Greek clergy, who, on certain holidays, personated feigned characters, and entered even the choir in masquerade, are elsewhere mentioned. (Warton's *History of English Poetry*, vol. ii., p. 370.) These passages do not prove that actual mysteries or sacred Dramas were enacted on such occasions; but probably the indecent revels alluded to bore the same relation to such representations, as the original rites of Bacchus to the more refined exhibitions of Thespis and Susarion.

There has been some dispute among theatrical antiquaries, in which country of Europe dramatic representations of a religious kind first appeared. The liberal and ingenious editor of the *Chester Mysteries* has well remarked, (in his introduction to that curious and beautiful volume,) that a difficulty must always attend the inquiry, from the doubts that exist, whether the earliest recorded performances of each country were merely pantomimes, or were accompanied with dialogue.

The practice of processions and pageants with music, in which characters, chiefly of sacred writ, were presented before the public, is so immediately connected with that of speaking exhibitions, that it is difficult to discriminate the one from the other.

We are tempted to look first to Italy; as it is natural that the tragic art should have revived in that country in which it was last exercised, and where traditions, and perhaps some faint traces, of its existence were still preserved.

"The first speaking sacred Drama," says Mr. Walker, "was *Della Passione di nostra Signore Gesu Christo*, by Giuliano Dati, Bishop of San Leo, who flourished about the year 1445." (Walker's *Essay on the Revival of the Drama in Italy*, p. 6.) This elegant author does, indeed, show that Italian scholars, and particularly Muscato, the Paduan historian, had composed two Latin Dramas upon something like the classical model, about the year 1300. Yet, although his play upon the tyranny and death of Ezzelino obtained him both reputation and honour, it does not appear to have been composed for the stage, but rather to have been a dramatic poem, the progress of the piece being often interrupted by the poet speaking in his own person.

The French Drama is traced by M. Le Grand as high as the thirteenth century; and he has produced one curious example of a pastoral, entitled *Un Jeu*. He mentions also a farce, two devotional pieces, and two moralities, to each of which he ascribes the same title. It may be suspected, that these are only dialogues recited by the travelling minstrels and troubadours; such as Petrarch acknowledges having sometimes composed for the benefit of the strolling musicians. Such were probably the spectacles exhibited by Philip the Fair in 1313, on account of the honour of knighthood conferred on his children. Ricoboni, anxious for the honour of Italy, denies to these amusements the

character of a legitimate Drama ; with what justice we have no information that can enable us to decide.

Amidst this uncertainty, it is not unpleasant to record the fair claim which Britain possesses to be one of the earliest, if not the very first nation in which dramatic representation seems to have been revived. The *Chester Mysteries*, called the *Whitsun Plays*, appear to have been performed during the mayoralty of John Arneway, who filled that office in Chester from 1268 to 1276. The very curious specimen of these Mysteries, which has been of late printed for private distribution by Mr. Markland of the Temple, furnishes us with the banns, or proclamation, containing the history and character of the pageants which it announces.

Reverende lordes and ladyes all,  
That at this time here assembled bee,  
By this messuage understande you shall,  
That sometymes there was mayor of this citie,  
Sir John Arneway, Knyghte, who most worthilye  
Contented himselfe to set out an playe  
The devise of one Done Randali, moonke of Chester Abbey.

" This moonke, moonke-like, in scriptures well seene,  
In storyes travelled with the best sorte ;  
In pagentes set fourth, apparently to all eyne,  
The Olde and Newe Testament with livelye comforte ;  
Intermynglinge therewith, onely to make sporte,  
Some things not warranted by any writt,  
Which to gladd the hearers he woulde men to take yt.

" This matter he abrevited into playes twenty-foure,  
And every playe of the matter gave but a taste,  
Leavinge for better learninges circumstances to accomlishe,  
For his proceedinges maye appeare to be in haste :  
Yet all together unprofitable his labour he did not waste,  
For at this daye, and ever, he deserveth the fame  
Which all moonkes deserve professinge that name.

" This worthy Knyghte Arneway, then mayor of this citie,  
This order toke, as declare to you I shall,  
That by twenty-fower occupations, artes, craftes, or misteries,  
These pagentes shoulde be played after breeffe rehearsall ;  
For every pagente a cariage to be provyded withall,  
In which sorte we purpose this Whitsontyde,  
Our pagentes into three partes to devyde.

" 1. Now you worshipful TANNERS that of custume olde  
The fall of Lucifer did set out,  
Some writers awarrante your matter, therefore be boulde  
Lustelye to playe the same to all the rowtte ;  
And yf any thereof stand in any doubte,  
Your author his author hath, your shewe let bee,  
Good speech, syne players, with apparill comelye."

(*Chester Mysteries.*)

Such were the celebrated *Mysteries of Chester*. To Mr. Markland's extracts from them is prefixed a curious dissertation upon their age and author. They were so highly popular as to be ranked in the esti-

mation of the vulgar with the ballads of Robin Hood ; for a character in one of the old moralities is introduced as boasting,

“ I can rhimes of Robin Hood, and Randal of Chester,  
But of our Lord and our Lady I can nought at all.”

The poetical value of these Mysteries is never considerable, though they are to be found among the dramatic antiquities of all parts of Europe. It was, however, soon discovered that the purity of the Christian religion was inconsistent with these rude games, in which passages from Scripture were profanely and indecently mingled with human inventions of a very rude, and sometimes an indecorous character. To the Mysteries, therefore, succeeded the Moralities, a species of dramatic exercise, which involved more art and ingenuity, and was besides much more proper for a public amusement, than the imitations or rather parodies of Sacred History, which had hitherto entertained the public.

These Moralities bear some analogy to the old or original comedy of the ancients. They were often founded upon allegorical subjects, and almost always bore a close and poignant allusion to the incidents of the day. Public reformation was their avowed object, and, of course, satire was frequently the implement which they employed. Dr. Percy, however, remarks that they were of two characters, serious and ludicrous ; the one approaching to the tragedy, the other to the comedy of classical times ; so that they brought taste as it were to the threshold of the real Drama. The difference betwixt the Catholic and Reformed religion was fiercely disputed in some of these Dramas ; and in Scotland, in particular, a mortal blow was aimed at the superstitions of the Roman Church, by the celebrated Sir David Lindsay, in a play or Morality acted in 1539, and entitled *The Satire of the Three Estates*. The objects of this Drama were entirely political, although it is mixed with some comic scenes, and introduced by an interlude, in coarseness altogether unmatched. The spirit of Aristophanes, in all its good and evil, seems to have actuated the Scottish King-at-arms. It is a singular proof of the liberty allowed to such representations at the period, that James V. and his queen repeatedly witnessed a piece, in which the corruptions of the existing government and religion were treated with such satirical severity. The play, as acted, seems to have differed in some respects from the state in which it exists in manuscript.

In a letter to the Lord Privy Seal of England, dated 26th January, 1540, SIR WILLIAM EURE (ENVOY FROM HENRY VIII.) gives the following account of the play, as it had then been performed :

“ In the feast of Ephipane at Lightgowe, before the king, queene, and the whole counsaile, spirituall and temporall.—In the firste entres come in SOLACE, (whose parte was but to make mery, sing ballets with his fellowes, and drink at the interluydes of the play,) whoe showed firste to all the audience the play to be played. Next come in a king,

who passed to his throne, having nae speche to thende of the play, and then to ratify and approve, as in Parliament, all things done by the rest of the players, which represented THE THREE ESTATES. With him came his cortiers, PLACEBO, PICTHANK, and FLATTERYE, and sic alike gard one swering he was the lustiest, starkeste, best proportionit, and most valeyant man that ever was; and ane other swore he was the beste with long-bowe, crosse-bowe, and culverin, and so fourth. Thairafter there come a man armed in harness, with a swerde drawn in his hande, a BUSHOP, a BURGES-MAN, and EXPERIENCE, cledde like a DOCTOR, who set them all down on the deis under the KING. After them come a POOR MAN, who did go up and down the scaffoldde, making a hevie complainte that he was hereyet, throw the courtiers taking his fewe in one place, and his tackes in another wherthrough he had sceyled his house, his wyfe and childrene beggyng thair brede, and so of many thousands in Scotland; saying thair was no remedy to be gotten, as he was neither acquainted with controller nor treasurer. And then he looked to the King, and said he was not king in Scotland, fore there was ane other king in Scotland that hanged JOHNE ARMSTRANG, with his fellowes, SYM THE LAIRD, and mony other mae, but he had lefte ane thing undone. Then he made a long narracione of the oppression of the poor, by the taking of the corse-presauante beists, and of the herryng of poor men by the consistorye lawe, and of many other abusions of the SPIRITUALITIE and Church. Then the BUSHOP raise and rebuked him. Then the MAN OF ARMES alledged the contraire, and commanded the poor man to go on. The poor man proceeds with a long list of the bushop's evil practices, the vices of cloisters, &c. This proved by EXPERIENCE, who, from a New Testament, shows the office of a bushop. The MAN OF ARMES and the BURGES approve of all that was said against the clergy, and alledge the expediency of a reform, with the consent of Parliament. The BUSHOP dissents. The MAN OF ARMES and the BURGES said they were two, and he but one, wherefore their voice should have most effect. Thereafter the King, in the play, ratified, approved, and confirmed all that was rehearsed."

The other nations of Europe, as well as England, had their Mysteries and Moralities. In France, Boileau, following Menestrier, imputes the introduction of these spectacles to travelling bands of pilgrims.

Chez nos devots ayeux, le théâtre abhorré  
Fut long temps dan la France un plaisir ignoré.  
Des pelerins, dit-on, une troupe grossiere  
En public à Paris y monta la premiere,  
Et sottement zélée, en sa simplicité  
Joua les saints, la Vierge, et Dieu par pieté  
*L'Art Poétique, Chant iii.*

In Spain the *Autos Sacramentales*, which are analogues to the Mys-

teries of the middle ages, are still presented without shocking a nation whose zeal is stronger than their taste; and, it is believed, such rude and wild plays, founded on Scripture, are also occasionally acted in Flanders. In the *History of the Council of Constance*, we find that Mysteries were introduced into Germany by the English, about 1417, and were first performed to welcome the Emperor Sigismund, on his return from England; and, from the choice of the subjects, we should almost suppose, that they had transferred to that country the *Chester Mysteries* themselves. "Les Anglois," says the historians, "se signalèrent entres les autres par un spectacle nouveau, ou au moins inusité jusques alors en Allemagne. Ce fut une comédie sacrée que les Evêques Anglois firent représenter devant l'Empereur, le Dimanche 13 de Janvier, sur la naissance du Sauveur, sur l'arrivée des mages, et sur la Massacre des Innocens." (*Hist. du Concile de Constance*, par L'Enfant, lib. v.) The character of these rude dramatic essays renders them rather subjects for the antiquary, than a part of a history of the regular dramatic art.

We may also pass over, with brief notice, the Latin plays which, upon the revival of letters, many of the learned composed, in express imitation of the ancient Grecian and Roman productions. We have mentioned those of Mussato, who was followed by the more celebrated Cararo, in the path which he had opened to fame. In other countries the same example was followed. These learned prolusions, however, were only addressed to persons of letters, then a very circumscribed circle, and, when acted at all, were presented at universities or courts on solemn public occasions. They form no step in the history of the Drama, unless that, by familiarising the learned with the form and rules of the ancient classical Drama, they gradually paved the way for the adoption of similar regulations into the revived vernacular Drama, and formed a division amongst the theatres of modern Europe, which has never yet been reconciled.

While the learned laboured to revive the Classical Drama in all its purity, the public at large, to which the treasures of the learned languages were as a fountain sealed, became addicted to a species of representation which properly neither fell under the denomination of comedy or tragedy, but was named History or Historical Drama. Charles Verardo, who, about 1492, composed a Drama of this sort, in Latin, upon the expulsion of the Moors from Granada, claims, for this production, a total emancipation from the rules of dramatic criticism.

Requirat autem nullus hic comedias  
Leges ut observantur aut tragediæ;  
Agenda nempe est HISTORIA, non fabula.

"Let none expect that in this piece the rules of comedy or of tragedy should be observed; we mean to act a history, not a fable." From

this expression it would seem, that, in a Historical Drama, the author did not think himself entitled to compress or alter the incidents as when the plot was fabulous, but was bound, to a certain extent, to conform to the actual course of events. In these histories, the poet often embraced the life and death of a monarch, or some other period of history, containing several years of actual time, which, nevertheless, were made to pass before the eyes of the audience during the two or three hours usually allotted for the action of a play. It is not to be supposed that, with so fair a field open before them, and the applause of the audience for their reward, the authors of these histories should long have confined themselves to the matter-of-fact contained in records. They speedily innovated or added to their dramatic chronicles, without regard to the real history. To those who plead for stage-plays, that they elucidate and explain many dark and obscure histories, and fix the facts firmly in the minds of the audience, of which they had otherwise but an imperfect apprehension, the stern Prynne replies with great scorn, "that play-poets do not explain, but sophisticate and deform good histories, with many false varnishes and playhouse fooleries;" and that "the histories are more accurately to be learned in the original authors who record them, than in derivate playhouse pamphlets, which corrupt them." Prynne's *Hist.-Mastix*, p. 940.

The dramatic chronicles, therefore, were a field in which the genius of the poet laboured to supply by character, sentiment, and incident, the meagre detail of the historian. They became so popular in England, that, during the short interval betwixt the revival of the stage and the appearance of Shakspeare, the most part of the English monarchs had lived and died upon the stage; and it is well known that almost all his historical plays were new written by him, upon the plan of old dramatic chronicles which already existed.

But the miscellaneous audience which crowded to the vernacular theatre, at its revival in Europe, were of that rank and intellect which is apt to become tired of a serious subject, and to demand that a lamentable tragedy should be intermingled with very pleasant mirth. The poets, obliged to cater for all tastes, seldom failed to insert the humours of some comic character, that the low or grotesque scenes in which he was engaged might serve as a relief to the graver passages of the Drama, and gratify the taste of those spectators who, like Christophero Sly, tired until the fool came on the stage again. Hence Sir Philip Sydney's censure on these dramatists, "how all their plays be neither right tragedies nor right comedies, mingling kings with clowns; not because the matter so carrieth it, but to thrust in the clown, by head and shoulders, to play a part in magestical matters, with neither decency nor discretion, so that neither the admiration and commiseration, nor the right sportfulness, is by their mongrel tragic-comedy attained." (*Defence of Poesie*, Sidney's *Arcadia*, edit. 1627, p. 563.) "If



we mark them well," he concludes, "funerals and hornpipes seldom match daintily together."

The historical plays led naturally into another class, which may be called Romantic Dramas, founded upon popular poems or fictitious narratives, as the former were on real history. Some of these were borrowed from foreign nations, ready dramatized to the hand of the borrower; others were founded on the plots which occurred in the almost innumerable novels and romances which we had made our own by translation. "I may boldly say it," says Gosson, a recreant playwright who attacked his former profession, "because I have seen it, that the *Palace of Pleasure*, the *Golden Asse*, the *Ethiopian History*, *Amadis of France*, the *Round Table*, *Bawdie Comedies in Latin, French, Italian, and Spanish*, have been thoroughly ransacked to furnish the play-house in London." But it was not to be supposed that the authors would confine themselves to stricter rules in pieces founded upon Italian and Spanish novels, or upon romances of chivalry, than they had acted upon in the histories. Every circumstance which tended to loosen the reins of theatrical discipline, in the one case, existed in the other; and, accordingly, comedies of intrigue, and tragedies of action and show, everywhere superseded, at least in popular estimation, the severe and simple model of the Classical Drama.

It happened that in England and Spain, in particular, the species of composition which was most independent of critical regulation was supported by the most brilliant display of genius. Lopez de Vega and Calderon rushed on the stage with their hasty and high-coloured, but glowing productions, fresh from the mint of imagination, and scorning that the cold art of criticism should weigh them in her balance. The taste of the Spaniards has been proverbially inclined to the wild, the romantic, and the chivalrous; and the audience of their bards would not have parted with one striking scene, however inartificially introduced, to have gained for their favourites the praise of Aristotle and all his commentators. Lopez de Vega himself was not ignorant of critical rules; but he pleads the taste of his countrymen as an apology for neglecting those restrictions which he had observed in his earlier studies.

"Yet true it is I too have written plays,  
The wiser few, who judge with skill might praise  
But when I see how show and nonsense draws  
The crowd's, and, more than all, the fair's applause;  
Who still are forward with indulgent rage  
To sanction every monster of the stage;  
I, doomed to write the public taste to hit,  
Resume the barbarous dress 'twas vain to quit;  
I lock up every rule before I write,  
Plautus and Terence banish from my sight,  
Lest rage should teach these injured wits to join.  
And their dumb books cry shame on works like mine.

To vulgar standards, then, I frame my ply,  
Writing at ease, for, since the public pay,  
'Tis just, methinks, we by their compass steer,  
And write the nonsense that they love to hear "

LORD HOLLAND'S *Life of Lope de Vega*, p 103

The Spanish comedies of intrigue also went astray, as far as their romantic tragedies, from the classical path. In fact, these new representations were infinitely more captivating from their vivacity, novelty, and, above all, from their reflecting the actual spirit of the time, and holding the mirror up to nature, than the cold imitations which the learned wrote in emulation of the Classic Drama. The one class are existing and living pictures of the times in which the authors lived; the others, the cold resurrection of the lifeless corpses which had long slumbered in the tomb of antiquity. The spirit of chivalry, which so long lingered in Spain, breathes through the wild and often extravagant genius of her poets. The hero is brave and loyal, and true to his mistress.

"A knight of love, who never broke a vow "

Lovers of this description, in whose mind the sexual passion is sublimated into high and romantic feeling, make a noble contrast with the coarse and licentious Greek or Roman, whose passion turns only on the difficulty of purchasing his mistress's person, but never conceives the slightest apprehension concerning the state of her affections.

That the crowd might have their loud laugh, a *grazioso*, or clown, usually a servant of the hero, is in the Spanish Drama, uniformly introduced to make sport. Like Kemp or Tarletun, famous in the clown's part before the time of Shakspeare, this personage was permitted to fill up his part with extemporary jesting, not only on the performers, but with the audience. This irregularity, with others, seems to have been borrowed by the English stage from that of Spain, and is the license which Hamlet condemns in his instructions to the players. "And let those that play your clowns speak no more than is set down for them, for there be of them that will themselves laugh, to set on some quantity of barren spectators to laugh too; though, in the meantime, some necessary question of the play be then to be considered, that's villanous; and shows a most pitiful ambition in the fool that uses it "

The bald simplicity of the ancient plots was, in like manner, contrasted to disadvantage with the intricacies, involutions, suspense, and bustle of Spanish intrigue upon the stage. Hence the boast of one of their poets, thus translated by Lord Holland :

"Invention, interest, sprightly turns in plays,  
Say what they will, are Spain's peculiar praise,  
Hers are the plots which strict attention seize,  
Full of intrigue, and yet disclosed with ease

Hence acts and scenes her fertile stage affords,  
Unknown, unrivall'd, on the foreign boards."

*Life of Lope de Vega*, p. 106.

While we admire the richness of fancy displayed in the Spanish pieces, it is impossible, in an age of refinement, to avoid being shocked by their wilful and extravagant neglect of every thing which can add probability to the action of their Drama. But the apology for this license is well pleaded by Lord Holland.

"Without dwelling on the expulsion of the Chorus, (a most unnatural and inconvenient machine,) the moderns, by admitting a complication of plot, have introduced a greater variety of incidents and character. The province of invention is enlarged; new passions, or at least new forms of the same passions, are brought within the scope of dramatic poetry. French sources of interest are opened, and additional powers of imagination called into activity. Can we then deny what extends its jurisdiction, and enhances its interest, to be an improvement in an art whose professed object is to stir the passions by the imitation of human actions? In saying this, I do not mean to justify the breach of decorum, the neglect of probability, the anachronisms and other extravagances of the founders of the modern theatre. Because the first disciples of the school were not models of perfection, it does not follow that the fundamental maxims were defective. The rudeness of their workmanship is no proof of the inferiority of the material; nor does the want of skill deprive them of the merit of having discovered the mine. The faults objected to them form no necessary part of the system they introduced. Their followers in every country have either completely corrected or gradually reformed such abuses. Those who bow not implicitly to the authority of Aristotle, yet avoid such violent outrages as are common in our early plays. And those who pique themselves on the strict observance of his laws, betray in the conduct, the sentiments, the characters, and the dialogue of their pieces (especially of their comedies) more resemblance to the modern than the ancient theatre; their code may be Grecian, but their manners, in spite of themselves, are Spanish, English, or French. They may renounce their pedigree, and even change their dress, but they cannot divest their features of a certain family-likeness to their poetical progenitors."

In France the irregularities of the revived Drama were of a lower complexion; for, until her stage was refined by Corneille, and brought under its present strict *régime*, it was adorned by but little talent; a circumstance which, amongst others, may account for the ease with which she subjected herself to critical rules, and assumed the yoke of Aristotle. Until she submitted to the Grecian forms and restrictions, there is but little interesting in the history of her stage.

England adopted the historical and romantic Drama with ardour, and in a state scarce more limited by rules than that of Spain herself.

Her writers seem early to have ransacked Spanish literature ; for the union of the countries during the short reign of Mary, nay even their wars under Elizabeth and Philip, made them acquainted with each other. The Spaniards had the start in the revival of the Drama. *Ferrex and Porrex*, our earliest tragedy, was first presented in 1561 ; and *Gammer Gurton's Needle*, our first comedy, in 1575 ; whereas Lopez de Vega (who was not by any means the earliest Spanish dramatist) died in 1562, leaving the stage stocked with his innumerable productions, to which his contemporaries had not failed to add their share. Thus, so soon as the stage of Britain was so far advanced as to be in a capacity of borrowing, that of Spain offered a fund to which her authors could have recourse ; and, in fact, the Spanish Drama continued to be a mine in which the British poets collected materials, often without acknowledgement, during all the earlier part of her dramatic history. From this source, as well as from the partialities of the audience, arose that early attempt at show and spectacle, at combats and marvellous incidents, which, though with very poor means of representation, our early dramatic poets loved to produce at the Bull or the Fortune playhouses. The extravagance of their plots, and the poor efforts by which our early dramatists endeavoured to represent show and procession, did not escape the censure of Sir Philip Sydney, who, leaning to the critical reformation which was already taking place in Italy, would gladly have seen our stage reduced to a more classical model.

"It is faultie," says that gallant knight, "both in place and time, the two necessary companions of all corporall actions. For the stage should alway present but one place ; and the uttermost time presupposed in it should bee, both by *Aristotle's* precept and common reason, but one day ; there are both many dayes and many places inartificially imagined. But if it be so in *Gorboduke*, how much more in all the rest ? where you shall have *Asia* of the one side, and *Affricke* of the other, and so many other under kingdomes, that the plair when he comes in, must ever begin with telling where hee is, or else the tale will not be conceived. Now shall you have three ladies walke to gather flowers, and then wee must beleve the stage to be a garden. By and by wee heare newes of shipwracke in the same place, then wee are to blame if we accept it not for a rocke. Upon the backe of that comes out a hideous monster with fire and smoke, and then the miserable beholders are bound to take it for a cave ; while, in the meantime, two armies flie in, represented with some swordes and bucklers, and then what hard heart will not receive it for a pitched field ? Now of time they are much more liberall ; for ordinarie it is, that two young princes fall in love. After many traverses shee is got with childe, delivered of a faire boy ; he is lost, groweth a man, falleth in love, and is readie to get another childe, and all this in two houres space ; which how absurd

it is in sense, even sense may imagine, and art hath taught, and all ancient examples justified, and at this day the ordinary players in *Italy* will not err in."

Italy, referred to by Sir Philip Sidney as the cradle of the reformed Drama, had had her own age of liberty and confusion; her mysteries, her moralities, her historical, and her romantic Dramas. But the taste for the ancient and classical stage was still rooted in the country where it had flourished, and Trissino is acknowledged as the father of the regular Drama. The *Sophonisba* of this learned prelate is praised by Voltaire as the first regular tragedy which Europe had seen after so many ages of barbarism. Pope has added his tribute.

"When learning, after the long Gothic night,  
Fair o'er the western world renew'd its light,  
With arts arising, Sophonisba rose,  
The tragic muse returning wept her woes;  
With her the Italian scene first learn'd to glow,  
And the first tears for her were taught to flow."

This tragedy was represented at Rome in the year 1515. The Greek model is severely observed, and the author has encumbered his scene with a Chorus. It has some poetic beauties, and is well calculated to recommend the new or rather revived system on which it was written. *La Rosmonda* of Ruçelleri was written about the same time with *Sophonisba*; and, after these pieces, tragic-comedies, histories, and romantic Dramas, were discarded, and succeeded by tragedies upon a regular classical model; written in verse having five acts, and generally with a Chorus.

Notwithstanding their rigorous attention to the ancient model, the modern tragic poets of Italy have not been very successful in arresting the attention of their countrymen. They are praised rather than followed; and the stern and unbending composition of Alfieri, while it has given a tone of rude and stoical dignity to his Dramas, has failed in rendering them attractive. They frequently please in the closet; but the audience of modern days requires to be kept awake by something more active, more bustling, more deeply interesting, than the lessons of the schools; and a poet of high fancy has written in some measure in vain, because he has mistaken the spirit of his age. The tragic actors also, whatever excellence they may attain to in their art, do not attract the same consideration, attention, and respect, as in France or England; and they who are the direct authors of a pleasure so nearly connected with our noblest and best feelings, occupy a rank subordinate to the performers at the opera.

It is only as a modification of the Drama, that we here propose to touch upon that entertainment of Italian growth, but known by importation in every civilized kingdom of Europe. These kingdoms have often rivalled each other in the rewards held forth to musical perform-

ers, and encouraged their merit by a degree of profusion, which has had the effect of rendering the professors petulant, capricious, and unmanageable. Their high emoluments are not granted, or their caprices submitted to, without a degree of pleasure in some degree corresponding to the expense and the sufferance; and it is in vain for the admirers of the legitimate Drama to pretend that such is not obtained. Voltaire has with more justice confessed, that probably the best imitation of the ancient stage was to be found in the Italian tragic opera. The recitative resembled the musical declamation of the Athenians, and the choruses, which are frequently introduced, when properly combined with the subject, approach to those of the Greeks, as forming a contrast, by the airs which they execute, to the recitative, or modulated dialogue of the scene. Voltaire instances the tragic operas of Metastasio in particular, as approaching in beauty of diction, and truth of sentiment, near to the ancient simplicity; and finds an apology even for the detached airs, (so fatal to probability,) in the beauty of the poetry and the perfection of the music. And although, as a critic and man of cultivated taste, this author prefers the regular, noble, and severe beauties of the classic stage, to the effeminate and meretricious charms of the opera, still he concludes, that, with all its defects, the sort of enchantment which results from the brilliant intermixture of scenery, chorus, dancing, music, dress, and decoration, subjects even the genius of criticism; and that the most sublime tragedy, and most artful comedy, will not be so frequently revisited by the same individual as an indifferent opera. We may add the experience of London to the testimony of this great critic, and, indeed, were it possible that actors could frequently be procured, possessed of the powers of action and of voice, which were united in Grassini, it would be impossible to deny to the opera the praise of being an amusement as exquisite in point of taste, as fascinating from show and music. But as the musical parts of the entertainment are predominant, every thing else has been too often sacrificed to the caprice of a composer, wholly ignorant in every art save his own, and the mean and paltry dialogue, which is used as a vehicle for the music, is become proverbial to express nonsense and inanity.

The Italian comedy, as well as their tragedy, boasts its regular descent from classical times. Like the comedy of Menander, it introduces *dramatis personæ*, whose characters are never varied, and some of whom are supposed to be directly descended from the ancient *Mimi* of the *Atellanian* fables. Such an origin is claimed for the celebrated Harlequin, and for the no less renowned Puncinello, our English Punch, both of whom retain the character of jesters, cowards, wags, and buffoons, proper to the *Sannio* of the Romans. It is believed of these worthies, that they existed before the time of Plautus, and continued to play their frolics during the middle ages, when the legitimate

Drama was unknown. For the former fact, sculpture, as well as tradition, is appealed to by Italian antiquaries, who have discovered the representation of these grotesque characters upon the Etruscan vases. In support of the latter averment, the grave authority of Saint Thomas Aquinas is appealed to, who, we rejoice to find, thought Harlequin and Punch no unlawful company in fitting time and place. "*Ludus*," says that eminent person, with more consideration for human infirmity than some saints of our own day, "*est necessarius ad conversationem vitæ humanæ: ad omnia autem que sunt utilia conversationi humanæ deputari possunt aliqua officia licita: et ideo etiam officium histrionum quod ordinatur ad solatium hominibus exhibendum, non est secundum se illicitum, nec sunt histriones in statu peccati, dummodo moderatè ludo utantur; id est, non utendo aliquibus illicitis verbis vel factis, ad ludum, et non adhibendo ludum negotus et temporibus indebitis unde illi qui moderate eis subveniunt, non peccant, sed juste faciunt mercedem ministrum eorum eis tribuendo. Et licet D. August. super. Joan. dicit quod donare res suas histrionibus vitium est immane. hoc intelligi debet de illis qui dant histrionibus qui in ludo utuntur illicitis, vel de illis qui superflue sua in tales consumunt, non de illis histrionibus qui moderate ludo utuntur.*"

Saint Anthony gives his sanction to Saint Thomas on this point: "*Histrionalis ars, quia deseruit humanæ recreationi, quæ necessaria est vitæ hominis secundum D. Thomam, de sa non est illicita, et de illa arte vivere non est prohibitum.*" (S. Antonius in 3 part. *sue Summæ*, tit. iii. cap. 4.) Saint Anthony, indeed, adds the reasonable restriction that no clergyman should play Harlequin, and that Punch should not exhibit in the church.

Under this venerable authority, these Mimi went on and flourished. Other characters enlarged their little Drama. The personages appeared in masks. "Each of these," says Mr. Walker, "was originally intended as a kind of characteristic representation of some particular Italian district or town. Thus *Pantalone* was a Venetian merchant; *Dottore*, a Bolognese physician; *Spaviento*, a Neapolitan braggadocio; *Pullicinella*, a wag of Apulia; *Giangurgolo* and *Coviello*, two clowns of Calabria; *Gelsomino*, a Roman beau; *Beltrame*, a Milanese simpleton; *Brighella*, a Ferrarese pimp; and *Arlecchino*, a blundering servant of Bergamo. Each of these personages was clad in a peculiar dress; each had his peculiar mask; and each spoke the dialect of the place he represented. Besides these, and a few other such personages, of which at least four were introduced in each play, there were the *Amorosos* or *Innamoratos*; that is, some men and women who acted serious parts, with *Smeraldina*, *Colombina*, *Spilletta*, and other females, who played the parts of *servettas* or waiting-maids. All these spoke Tuscan or Roman, and wore no masks." (*Essay on the Revival of the Drama in Italy*, p. 249.)

The pieces acted by this class of actors were called *Commedia dell' arte*, and were congenial to the taste of the Italians, with whom gesticulation and buffoonery are natural attributes. Their Drama was of the most simple kind. Each of the actors was already possessed of his dramatic character, which was as inalienable as his dress, was master of the dialect he was to use, and had his imagination and memory stored with all the characteristic jests, or *lazzi* as they were termed, peculiar to the personage he represented. All that the author had to do was to invent the skeleton of a plot, which should bring his characters into dramatic situation with respect to each other. The dialogue suited to the occasion was invented by the players, just as ours invest their parts with the proper gestures and actions. This skeleton had the name of *scenario*, and the precise action as well as the dialogue was filled up by the performers, either impromptu, or in consequence of previous arrangement and premeditation. This species of comedy was extremely popular, especially among the lower class of spectators. It was often adopted as an amusement in good society, and by men of genius; and Flamineo de la Scala has left about fifty such *scenarios* adapted for representation. The fashion even found its way into England, and probably the part of Master Punch, who first appeared in the character of the *Vice* of the English morality, was trusted to the improvisatory talents of the actor. Mr. D'Israeli, a curious as well as elegant investigator of ancient literature, has shown, that at least one scheme of a *Commedia dell' arte* has been preserved to us. It is published in the *Variorum* edition of Shakespeare, but remains unexplained by the commentators. Such comedies, it is evident, could require no higher merit in the composer than the imagining and sketching a few comic situations; the dialogue and diction was all intrusted to the players.

The Italians, however, became early possessed of a regular comedy, which engrossed the admiration of the more cultivated classes of society. Bibbiena's comedy, entitled *La Calandra*, is composed in imitation of the Dramas of Terence and Plautus. It was first acted in 1490. *La Calandra* is remarkable not only for being the first Italian comedy, but also for the perfection of scenic decoration with which it was accompanied in the representation. It was followed by the productions of Ariosto and Trissino, and other authors in the same line. But it appears from the efforts used to support this style of Drama, that it did not take kindly root in the soil, and lacked that popularity which alone can nurse it freely. Various societies were formed under the whimsical titles of *Gli Intronati*, *Gli Insensati*, and so forth, for the express purpose of bringing forward the regular Drama; exertions which would certainly have been unnecessary, had it received that support and encouragement which arises from general popularity.

Goldoni, in a later age, at once indulged his own fanciful genius and



his natural indolence, by renouncing the classical rules, and endeavouring to throw into the old and native Italian *Mascherata* the variety and attributes of the proper comedy. He adopted Harlequin and the rest of his merry troop in the characters which they held, and endeavoured to enlist them in the more regular service of the Drama ; just as free corps and partisans are sometimes new-modelled into battalions of the line. This ingenious and lively writer retained all the license of the *Commedia dell' arte*, and all the immunities which it claimed from regular and classical rules ; but instead of trusting to the extempore jests and grotesque wit of the persons whom he introduced, he engaged them in dialogues, as well as plots, of his own invention, which often display much humour and even pathos. It required, however, the richness of a fancy like Goldoni's to extract novelty and interest from a dramatic system in which so many of the actors held a fixed and prescriptive character, hardly admitting of being varied. Accordingly, we do not find that the Italian stage is at present in a more flourishing condition than that of other modern nations.

The revival of the regular Drama in France was attended with important consequences, owing to the nature of her government, the general use of her language throughout Europe, and the influence which, from her situation, she must necessarily hold over other nations. It is the boast of Paris that the regular classical Drama, banished from every other stage, found a safe and honourable refuge on her own. Yet France has reluctantly confessed that she also had her hour of barbarism. Her earlier Drama was borrowed, like that of other countries, from Spain, who, during the whole of the sixteenth and great part of the seventeenth century, held such a formidable predominance in the European republic. While the classical stage was reviving in Italy, and the historical and romantic Drama was flourishing in Spain, France was torn to pieces by civil discord. The first French tragedy composed upon a regular plan was that of *Mairet*, imitated from the *Sophonisba* of Trissino ; and Riccoboni boasts with justice, that whoever shall compare the Italian tragedy of the sixteenth century with that of the French of the same period, will find the latter extravagant and irregular, and the former already possessed of gravity, dignity, and regularity. The French, like the English, date the excellence of their stage from one great author ; and the illustrious name of Pierre Corneille affords to their dramatic history the mighty landmark which Shakspeare gives to our own.

Cardinal Richelieu, who had succeeded in establishing upon a broad basis the absolute power of the French monarch, was not insensible to the graces and ornaments which the throne derived from being surrounded by the Muses. He was himself fond of poetry, and even a competitor for the honours of the buskin. He placed himself at the

head of five dramatic writers. to whom, on that account, the public gave the title of *Les Cinq Auteurs*. All these are deservedly forgotten excepting Corneille, of whose successful talent the cardinal had the meanness to evince no ordinary degree of jealousy. The malevolence of the minister was carried so far, that he employed the French Academy, whose complaisance must be recorded to their shame, to criticize severely the *Cid*, the first, and perhaps the finest of Corneille's tragedies. Scuderie, a favourite of the Cardinal, buoyed by Richelieu's favour, was able for some time to balance Corneille in the opinion of the public ; but his name is now scarcely known by any other circumstance than his imprudent and audacious rivalry. This great man was not only surrounded by the worst possible models, but unfortunately the authors of these models were also favourites of the public, and of the all-powerful Cardinal ; yet Corneille vanquished the taste of his age, the competition of his rivals, and the envy of Richelieu.

Corneille, like his predecessors, and like Routrou in particular, borrowed liberally from the Spanish theatre ; but his own taste, regulated probably upon his situation, dictated an adherence to the classical model. The French stage arose, it must be remembered, under the protection of an absolute monarch, for whose amusement the poet laboured, and in whose presence the Drama was performed. It followed as a natural consequence, that a more strict etiquette was exacted upon the scene than had hitherto been supposed applicable to a merely popular amusement. A departure from regularity in tragedy was no longer a bold flight. A violation of decorum in comedy was no longer a broad jest. When the audience was dignified by the presence of the monarch, the former became an impertinence, and the latter a gross and indecent insult. The muse of comedy was therefore bound over for her good behaviour ; and even her grave sister was laid under such rules and restrictions as should ensure the decorum and dignity of her scene.

It was at this period that those classical fetters which are framed on the three unities were fashioned into form, and imposed on the French Drama. These are acknowledged by Corneille, in his *Essay upon Dramatic Poetry*, in the following short but emphatic sentence :—" *Il faut observer les unités d'action, de lieu, et de jour : personne n'en doute.*" The rule, as thus emphatically admitted by the fiery Corneille, was equally binding upon the elegant Racine, and has fettered the French stage until the present day. "La Motte," says Voltaire, "a man of wit and talent, but attached to paradoxes, has written in our time against the doctrine of the Unities, but that literary heresy had no success."

Upon these rules, adopted by the very first writer of eminence for the French stage, and subscribed to by all succeeding dramatists, depends the principal and long-disputed difference betwixt the Drama of

France, and those countries in which her laws of taste had been received; and the stages of Spain, England, and modern Germany, where those critical maxims have been controverted. In other words, the unities proper to the Classical Drama have been found inapplicable to plays of a historical or romantic plan. It is, therefore, necessary to examine with accuracy the essence and effect of those laws so often disputed with more obstinacy than liberality.

The arbitrary forms to which the French thus subjected their theatre are, in their general purport, founded on good and sound rules of the critical art. But, considered literally, the interpretation put upon those unities by the French critics must necessarily lay the dramatic author under restraints equally severe and unnecessary, without affording any corresponding addition to the value of his work. The pedantry by which they are enforced, reminds one of the extreme, minute, rigorous, and punctilious discipline, to which some regiments have been subjected by a pedantic commanding officer, which seldom fails to lower the spirit, and destroy the temper of the soldier, without being of the slightest service to him in the moment of danger or the day of battle.

The first dramatic unity is that of Action; and, rightly understood, it is by far the most important. A whole, says Aristotle, is that which has a beginning, middle, and end. In short, one strong concentrated interest, upon which all subordinate incidents depend, and to which they contribute, must pervade the piece. It must open with the commencement of the play, evolve itself, and be progressive with its progress,—must be perpetually in sight and never stationary, until at length it arrives at a catastrophe, by which it is ended and extinguished. In this rule, abstractedly considered, there is nothing but what is consistent with good sense and sound criticism. The period allowed for dramatic representation is not long, and will not admit of the episodic ornaments which may be happily introduced into epic poetry. And as the restlessness or impatience of a theatrical audience is always one of its marked characteristics, it has been observed, that neither the most animated description, nor the most beautiful poetry, can ever reconcile the spectators to those inartificial scenes in which the plot or action of the piece stands still, that the performers may say fine things. The introduction of an interest, separate and distinct from the main action of the play, has a still worse effect; it diminishes the effect of the whole, and divides the attention of the audience; as a pack of hounds, when in full pursuit, are impeded and puzzled by starting a fresh object of chase.

Yet even this rule must be liberally considered, if we would allow dramatic authors that fair room and exercise for their genius, which gives rise to the noblest display of genius in the art. Modern dramatists are no longer, it must be remembered, limited to the simple and surer uniformity of the ancient Drama, which fixed on one single

event as its object,—made it the subject of the moral reflections of the Chorus,—managed it by the intervention of three, or at most five persons, and consequently presented a picture so limited in size and subject, that there was no difficulty in avoiding the intermixture of a foreign interest. The modern taste has opened the stage to a wider range of topics, which are, at the same time, more complicated in detail, depending on the agency of a variety of performers, and on the result of a succession of events. Such Dramas have indeed a unity of action peculiar to themselves, which should predominate over and absorb every other. But although, like the oak, it should predominate over all the neighbouring underwood, its dignity is not injured by the presence and vicinity of that which it overshadows. On the contrary, a succession of events tending to the same end, if they do not divert the attention from the principal interest, cannot fail, by their variety and succession, to keep it fixed upon the business of the scene.

To take an example. In the tragedy of *Macbeth*, a chain of varied and important events is introduced, any one link of which might be hammered out into a Drama, on the severe and simple model of the Drama of ancient Greece. There is the murder of Duncan,—that of Banquo,—and the dethronement and death of the tyrant; all which are events complete of themselves, independent of each other, and yet included within one tragedy of five acts. But, nevertheless, this is never felt as a deficiency in the performance. It is to the character of Macbeth, to his ambition, guilt, remorse, and final punishment, that the mind attaches itself during the whole play; and thus the succession of various incidents, unconnected excepting by the relation they bear to the principal personage, far from distracting the attention of the audience, continues to sharpen and irritate curiosity till the curtain drops over the fallen tyrant. This is not, indeed, a unity of action according to the rule of Aristotle, or the observance of the French theatre; but, in a higher point of view, it has all the advantage which could possibly be derived from the severest adherence to the precept of Aristotle, with this additional merit, that the interest never stagnates in declamation, or is suspended by unnecessary dialogue.

It would in fact be easy to show, that the unity of action, in its strict sense, may frequently be an unnatural as well as a cumbrous restraint on the genius of the poet. In the course of nature, an insulated action seldom exists, of a nature proper to transfer to the stage. If, indeed, the play is founded on some single mythological fable, or if the scene is laid in some early stage of society, when man as yet remained separated from his kind, and connected only with his petty tribe or family, the subject of a plot may be chosen where the agency of a very few persons, and these naturally connected together, may, without foreign or extraneous assistance, afford matter for a tragedy. But, in the actual course of the peopled world, men are so crowded together, and

their movements depend so much upon impulses foreign to themselves, that the action must often appear multiplied and complicated, and all that the author can do is, to preserve the interest uniform and undivided. Its progress may be likened to that of a brook through beautiful scenery. A judicious improver of the landscape would be certainly desirous to make its course visible, but not to cut off its beautiful undulations, or to compel it into a straight channel. He would follow the course of nature, and neither affect to conceal the smaller rills by which the stream was fed, nor bring them so much in view as to deprive the principal object of its consequence. We admit the difficulty inseparable from the dramatic art, and must grant, that the author runs some risk of losing sight of the main interest of the piece, by dwelling upon the subordinate accessories; but we contend, that the attention of the audience is still more likely to be fatigued by a bald and simple plot, to which, during the course of five acts, there must belong much speaking and little progress. And, in point of common sense and common feeling, that piece must always present unity of action which has unity of interest and feeling; which fixes the mind of the audience upon one train of thought and passion, to which every occurrence in the Drama verges, and which is consummated and wound up by the final catastrophe.

The second dramatic unity is that of Time, about which the critics of various nations have disagreed. If taken in its strict and proper sense, it means that the time occupied by the representation, should not exceed that supposed to be consumed in the action represented. But even Aristotle extends the duration of the action to one revolution of the sun, and Corneille extends it to thirty hours, which is, to the actual period of representation, as ten to one. Boileau, a supereminent authority, thus lays down the rule for the unities of time and place.—

“ Que le lieu de la scène y soit fixé et marqué  
Un Rimeur, sans peril, delà les Pyrénées,  
Sur la scène en un jour renferme des années ;  
Là souvent le Héros d'un spectacle grossier,  
Enfant au premier acte, est barbon au dernier,  
Mais nous, que la Raison à ses règles engage,  
Nous voulons qu'avec art l'action se ménage  
Qu'en un lieu, qu'en jour, un seul fait accompli,  
Tienne jusqu'à la fin le Théâtre rempli ”

It has been triumphantly remarked, that in thus yielding up the strict letter of the precept—in allowing the three hours employed in acting a play to be multiplied into twenty-four or thirty—the critics have retained nearly all the inconvenience of this famous rule, while they sacrificed its principle, and any advantage attached to its observance. The only benefit supposed to be attached to this unity is that of probability. We shall not at present inquire whether this is worth preserving, at the cost of imposing heavy restrictions on dramatic

genius. But granting the affirmative, probability is as much violated by squeezing the events of the next twenty-four hours into a period of only three, as if the author had exercised the still greater license of the English and Spanish theatres. There is no charm in the revolution of the sun, which circumscribes within that particular period the events of a Drama. When the magic circle drawn around the author by the actual date of representation is once obliterated, the argument grounded upon probability falls ; and he may extend his narrative unconfined by any rule, except what may be considered as resolving itself into the unity of action. A week, a month, a year, years—may be included in the course of the Drama, provided always the poet has power so to rivet the attention of the audience on the passing scene, that the lapse of time shall pass unregarded. There must be none of those marked pauses which force upon the spectator's attention the breach of this unity. Still less ought the judicious dramatist to permit his piece to embrace such a space of time, as shall necessarily produce the change on the persons of the characters ridiculed by Boileau. The extravagant conduct of the plot in the *Winter's Tale* has gone far to depreciate that Drama, which, in passages of detached beauty, is inferior to none of Shakspeare's in the opinion of the best judges. It might perhaps be improved in acting, by performing the three first acts as a play, and the fourth and fifth as an after piece. Yet, even as it is now acted, who is it that, notwithstanding the cold objection arising out of the breach of unity, witnesses, without delight, the exquisite contrast betwixt the court and the hamlet, the fascinating and simple elegance of Perdita, or the witty rogueries of Autolycus? The poet is too powerful for the critic, and we lose the exercise of our judgment in the warmth of our admiration.

The faults of Shakspeare, or of his age, we do not, however, recommend to the modern dramatist, whose modesty will certainly place him in his own estimation far beneath that powerful magician, whose art could fascinate us even by means of deformity itself. But if, for his own sake, the author ought to avoid such gross violations of dramatic rule, the public, for theirs, ought not to tie him down to such severe limitations as must cramp, at least, if they do not destroy, his power of affording them pleasure. If the whole five acts are to be compressed within the space of twenty-four hours, the events must, in the general case, be either so much crowded upon each other as to destroy the very probability which it is the purpose of this law to preserve ; or, many of them, being supposed to have happened before the commencement of the piece, must be detailed in narrative, which never fails to have a bad effect on the stage.

The same objections apply to the rigid enforcement of the third unity, that of Place ; and, indeed, the French authors have used respecting it the license of relaxing, in practice, the severity of their

theory. They have frequently infringed the rule which they affirm to be inviolable ; and their flexible creed permits the place to be changed, provided the audience are not transported out of the city where the scene is laid. This mitigation of doctrine, like that granted in the unity of time, is a virtual resignation of the principle contended for. Let us examine, however, upon what that principle is founded.

The rule which prohibits the shifting the scene during the period of performance was borrowed by the French from the ancients, without considering the peculiar circumstances in which it arose. First, We have seen already that, during the ancient Drama, there was no division into acts, and that the action was only suspended during the songs of the Chorus, who themselves represented a certain class of personages connected with the scene. The stage, therefore, was always filled ; and a supposed change of place would have implied the violent improbability, that the whole Chorus were transported, while in the sight of the spectators, and employed in the discharge of their parts, to the new scene of action. Secondly, There is evidence that in the *Eumenides* of Æschylus, and the *Ajax* of Sophocles, the scene is actually changed, in defiance of the presence of the Chorus ; and a much greater violation of probability is incurred than could have taken place in a modern theatre, where, before every change of scene, the stage is emptied of the performers. Thirdly, The ancients were less hardly pressed by this rule than the modern writers. From the dimensions of their theatres, and the size of their stages, the place of action was considerably larger, and might be held to include a wider extent than ours. The climate of Greece admitted of many things being transacted with propriety in the open air ; and, finally, they had a contrivance for displaying the interior of a house or temple to the audience, which, if it was not an actual change of scene, was adapted to the same purpose.

If this long-litigated question, therefore, is to be disposed of by precedent, we have shown that the rule of the ancients was neither absolute, nor did the circumstances of their stage correspond with those of ours ; to which it may be added, that the simple and inartificial structure of their plots seldom required a change of scene. But, surely, it is of less consequence to examine the practice of the ancients, than to consider how far it is founded upon truth, good taste, and general effect. Granting, therefore, that the supposed illusion, which transports the spectator to the actual scene of action, really exists, let us inquire whether, in sacrificing the privilege of an occasional change of scene, we do not run the risk of shocking the spectator, and disturbing his delightful dreams, by other absurdities and improbabilities, attendant necessarily on a scrupulous adherence to this restriction.

If the action is always to pass in the scene, some place of general resort must be adopted, a hall, ante-room, or the like. It can seldom

be so fortunately selected but that much must be necessarily discussed there, which, in order to preserve any appearance of probability, should be transacted elsewhere ; that many persons must be introduced whose presence in that particular place must appear unnatural ; and that much must be done there, which the very circumstances of the piece render totally absurd. Dennis has applied these observations with great force, and at the same time with great bitterness, in his critique upon *Cato*, which Johnson has quoted at length in his *Life of Addison*. The scene, it must be remembered, is laid, during the whole Drama, with scrupulous attention to the classical rule, in the great hall of Cato's palace at Utica. Here the conspirators lay their plots, the lovers carry on their intrigues ; and yet Sempronius, with great inconsistency, disguises himself as Juba, to obtain entrance into this vestibule, which was common to all. Here Cato retires to moralize, and chides his son for interrupting him, and, although he retires to stab himself, it is to this place that he is brought back to die. All this affords a striking proof how genius and taste can be fettered and embarrassed by a too pedantic observance of rules. Let no one suppose that the inconveniences arising from the rigid observance of the unity of place, occur in the tragedy of *Cato* alone ; they might, in that case, be attributed to the inexperience or want of skill in the author. The tragedies of Corneille and Racine afford examples enough that the authors found themselves compelled to violate the rules of probability and common sense, in order to adhere to those of Aristotle. In the tragedy of *Cinna*, for example, the scene is laid in the Emperor's cabinet ; and, in that very cabinet, compelled, doubtless, by the laws of unity, Amelia shouts forth aloud her resolution to assassinate the Emperor. It is there, too, that Maximus and Cinna confide to each other all the secrets of their conspiracy ; and it is there where, to render the impropriety more glaring, Cinna suddenly reflects upon the rashness of his own conduct :—

“ Amis, dans ce palais on peut nous écouter ;  
Et nous parlons peut-être avec trop d'imprudence,  
Dans un lieu si mal propre à notre confidence.”

It would be an invidious, but no difficult task, to show that several of the *chefs-d'œuvres* of the French Drama are liable to similar objections ; and that the awkward dilemmas in which the unity of place involves them, are far more likely to destroy the illusion of the performance than the mere change of scene would have done. But we refer the reader to the *Dramaturgie* of Lessing upon this curious topic.

The main question yet remains behind, namely, whether such an illusion is actually produced in the minds of the audience by the best acted play, as induces them to suppose themselves witnessing a reality ; —an illusion, in short, so complete as to suffer interruption from the occasional extension of time, or change of place, in the course of the



piece? We do not hesitate to say that no such impression was ever produced on a sane understanding; and that the Parisian critic, in whose presence the unities are never violated, no more mistakes Talma for Nero, than a London citizen identifies Kemble with Coriolanus, or Kean with Richard III. The ancients, from the distance of the stage, and their mode of dressing and disguising their characters, might certainly approach a step nearer to reality; and, producing on their stage the very images of the deities they worshipped, speaking the language which they accounted proper to them, it is probable that, to minds capable of high excitation, there might be a shade of this illusion in their representations. The solemn distance of the stage, the continuous and uninterrupted action, kept the attention of the Greeks at once more closely riveted, and more abstracted from surrounding circumstances. But, in the modern theatre, the rapid succession of intervals for reflection, the well known features of the actors, the language which they speak, differing frequently from that which belongs to the age and country where the scene is laid—interrupt, at every turn, every approximation to the fantastic vision of reality into which those writers who insist upon the strict observance of the unities, suppose the audience to be lulled. To use the nervous words of Johnson, “It is false, that any representation is mistaken for reality; that any dramatic fable in its materiality was ever credible, or, for a single moment, was ever credited.” There is a conventional treaty between the author and the audience, that, upon certain suppositions being granted by the latter, his powers of imagination shall be exerted for the amusement of the spectators. The postulates which are demanded, even upon the French theatre, and under the strictest model, are of no ordinary magnitude. Although the stage is lighted with lamps, the spectator must say with the subjugated Catherine,

“I grant it is the sun that shines so bright”

The painted canvass must pass for a landscape; the well-known faces of the performers for those of ancient Greeks, or Romans, or Saracens, and the present time for many ages distant. He that submits to such a convention ought not scrupulously to limit his own enjoyment. That which is supposed Rome in one act, may, in the next, be fancied Paris; and as for time, it is, to use the words of Dr. Johnson, “of all modes of existence, most obsequious to imagination; a lapse of years is as easily conceived as a passage of hours. In contemplation we easily contract the time of real actions, and, therefore, willingly permit it to be contracted when we only see their imitation.”

If dramatic representation does not produce the impression of reality, in what, may it be asked, consists its power? We reply, that its effects are produced by the powerful emotions which it excites in the minds of the spectators. The professors of every fine art operate their im-

pressions in the same manner, though they address themselves to different organs. The painter exhibits his scene to the eye ; the orator pours his thunder upon the ear ; the poet awakens the imagination of his reader by written description ; but each has the same motive, the hope, namely, of exciting in the reader, hearer, or spectator, a tone of feeling similar to that which existed in his own bosom, ere it was bodied forth by his pencil, tongue, or pen. It is the artist's object, in short, to tune the reader's imagination to the same pitch with his own ; and to communicate, as well as colours and words can do, the same sublime sensations which had dictated his own compositions. The tragedian attempts to attain this object still more forcibly, because his art combines those of the poet, orator, and artist, by storming, as it were, the imagination at once through the eye and the ear. Undoubtedly, a Drama with such advantages, and with those of dresses and costume, approaches more nearly to actual reality ; and, therefore, has a better chance of attaining its object, especially when addressing the sluggish and inert fancies of the multitude ; although it may remain a doubtful question whether, with all these means and appliances, minds of a high poetic temperature may not receive a more lively impression from the solitary perusal, than from the representation, of one of Shakspeare's plays. But, to the most ignorant spectator, however unaccustomed to the trick of the scene, the excitement which his fancy receives, falls materially short of actual mental delusion. Even the sapient Partridge himself never thought of being startled at the apparition of the King of Denmark, which he knew to be only a man in a strange dress ; it was the terror so admirably expressed by Garrick, which communicated itself to his feelings, and made him reverse the case of the fiends, and tremble without believing. In truth, the effects produced upon this imaginary character, as described by an excellent judge of human nature, exhibit, probably, the highest point of illusion to which theatrical exhibition can conduct a rational being. In an agony of terror which made his knees knock against each other, he never forgets that he is only witnessing a play. The presence of Mrs. Millar and his master assures him against the reality of the apparition, yet he is no more able to subdue his terrors by this comfortable reflection, than we have been to check our tears, although well aware that the Belvidera, with whose sorrows we sympathized, was no other than our own inimitable Mrs. Siddons. With all our passions, and all our sympathies, we are still conscious of the ideal character of that which excites them ; and it is probably this very consciousness of the unreality of the scene, that refines our sorrows into a melancholy, yet delicious emotion, and extracts from it that bitterness necessarily connected with a display of similar misery in actual life.

If, therefore, no illusion subsists of a character to be affected by a change of scene, or by the prolongation of the time beyond the rules of

Aristotle, the very foundation of these unities is undermined ; but, at the same time, every judicious author will use liberty with prudence.

If we are inclined to ascend to the origin of these celebrated rules, we ought not to be satisfied with the *ipse dixit* of a Grecian critic, who wrote so many centuries ago, and whose works have reference to a state of dramatic composition which has now no existence. Upon the revival of letters, indeed, the authority of Aristotle was considered as omnipotent ; but even Boileau remonstrated against his authority when weighed with reason and common sense.

"Un pedant enivré de sa vaine science,  
Tout hérissé de Grec, tout bouffu d'arrogance,  
Et qui de mille auteurs retenus mot pour mot,  
Dans la teste entassés, n'a souvent fait qu'un sot,  
Croit qu'un livre fait tout, et que sans Aristotle,  
La raison ne voit goutte, et le bon sens radote."

The opinions of Aristotle must be judged of according to the opportunities and authorities which lay open before him ; and from the high critical judgment he has displayed, we can scarce err in supposing he would have drawn different results, in different circumstances. Dr. Drake, whose industry and taste have concentrated so much curious information respecting Shakspeare and his age, has quoted upon this topic a striking passage from Mr. Morgan's *Essay on the Character of Falstaff*.

Speaking, says Dr. Drake, of the magic influence which our poet almost invariably exerts over his auditors, Mr. Morgan remarks that

"On such an occasion, a fellow like *Rymer*,\* waking from his trance, shall lift up his constable's staff, and charge this great magician, this daring *practiser of arts inhibited*, in the name of Aristotle, to surrender ; whilst Aristotle himself, disowning his wretched officer, would fall prostrate at his feet and acknowledge his supremacy.—O supreme of dramatic excellence ! (might he say,) not to me be imputed the insolence of fools. The bards of *Greece* were confined within the narrow circle of the Chorus, and hence they found themselves constrained to practise, for the most part, the precision, and copy the details of nature. I followed them, and knew not that a larger circle might be drawn, and the Drama extended to the whole reach of human genius. Convinced, I see that a more compendious *nature* may be obtained : a nature of *effects* only, to which neither the relation of place, or continuity of time, are always essential. Nature, condescending to the faculties and apprehensions of man, has drawn through human life a regular chain of visible causes and effects : But Poetry delights in surprise, conceals her steps, seizes at once upon the heart, and obtains the sublime of things without betraying the rounds of her ascent. True poetry is *magic not nature* ; an effect from causes hidden or unknown. To the

\* Rymer was a calumniator of Shakspeare.

magician I prescribed no laws; his law and his power are one; his power is his law. If his end is obtained, who shall question his course? Means, whether apparent or hidden, are justified in poesy by success; but then most perfect and most admirable when most concealed.

"Yes," continues Mr. Morgan, "whatever may be the neglect of some, or the censure of others, there are those who firmly believe, that this wild, this uncultivated *barbarian*, as he has been called, has not yet obtained one half of his fame; and who trust that some new Stagyrite will arise, who, instead of pecking at the surface of things, will enter into the inward soul of his compositions, and expel, by the force of congenial feelings, those foreign impurities which have stained and disgraced his page. And as to those *spots* which still remain, they may perhaps become invisible, to those who shall seek them through the medium of his beauties, instead of looking for those beauties, as is too frequently done, through the smoke of some real or imputed obscurity. When the hand of time shall have brushed off his present editors and commentators, and when the very name of Voltaire, and even the memory of the language in which he has written, shall be no more, the Apalachian mountains, the banks of the Ohio, and the plains of Sciola, shall resound with the accents of this *barbarian*. In his native tongue he shall roll the genuine passions of nature; nor shall the griefs of *Lear* be alleviated, or the charms and wit of *Rosalind* be abated by time."\*

In adopting the views of those authors who have pleaded for the liberty of the poet, it is not our intention to deny, that great advantages may be obtained by the observance of the unities; not considering them as in themselves essential to the play, but only as points upon which the credibility and intelligibility of the action in some sort depends. We acknowledge, for example, that the author would be deficient in dramatic art, who should divide the interest of his piece into two or more separate plots, instead of combining it in one progressive action. We confess, moreover, that the writer, who more violently extends the time, or more frequently changes the place of representation, than can be justified by the necessity of the story, and vindicated by his exertion of dramatic force, acts unwisely, in so far as he is likely to embarrass a great part of the audience, who, from imperfect hearing or slowness of comprehension, may find it difficult to apprehend the plot of his play. The latitude which we are disposed to grant, is regulated by the circumstances of the case, the interest of the plot, and, above all, the talents of the author. He that despises the praise of regularity which is attainable by study, cannot reckon on the indulgence of the audience, unless on the condition of indemnifying them by force of genius. If a definitive rule were to be adopted, we should say, that it would certainly be judicious to place any change of place or extension of time

\* *Shakespeare and his Times*, by Nathan Drake, M.D., pp. 553, 554, vol. ii.

at the beginning of a new act ; as the falling of the curtain and cessation of the action have prepared the audience to set off, as it were, upon a new score. But we consider the whole of these points of propriety as secondary to the real purposes of the Drama, and not as liminary of that gifted genius, who can, in the whirlwind of his scene, bear the imagination of his audience along with him over the boundaries of place,

“ While panting Time toils after him in vain.”

But it is not upon the observance of the unities alone that the French found their pretensions to a classical theatre. They boast also to have discarded that intermixture of tragic and comic scenes, which was anciently universal upon the Spanish and English stages.

If it had been only understood by this reformation, that the French condemned and renounced that species of tragi-comedy, which comprehended two distinct plots, the one of a serious, the other of a humorous character, and these two totally unconnected, we give them full credit for their restriction. Dryden, in the *Spanish Friar*, and other pieces ; and Southern, both in *Oronooko* and *Isabella*, as well as many other authors of their age, have in this particular transgressed unpardonably the unity of action. For, in the cases we have quoted, the combination of the two plots is so slight, that the serious and comic scenes, separated, might each furnish forth a separate Drama ; so that the audience appear to be listening not to one play only, but to two dramatic actions independent of each other, although contained in the same piece. So far, therefore, we heartily agree in the rule which excludes such an unhappy interchange of inconsistent scenes, moving upon opposite principles and interests.

When, however, the French critics carry this rule farther, and prescribe the appearance of comic or inferior characters, however intimately connected with the tragic plot, we would observe, in the first place, that they run the risk of diminishing the reality of the scene ; and secondly, that they exclude a class of circumstances which are essential to its beauty.

On the first point it must be observed, that the rule which imposes upon valets and subordinate personages the necessity of talking as harmonious verse and as elegant poetry as their masters, entirely ruins the probability of the action. Where all is elegant, nothing can be sublime ; where all is ornamented, nothing can be impressive ; where all is tuned to the same smooth *false* of sentiment, nothing can be natural or real. By such an assimilation of manners and language, we stamp fiction on the very front of our dramatic representation. The touches of nature which Shakspeare has exhibited in his lower and gayer characters, like the chastened background of a landscape, increase the effect of the principal group. The light and fanciful humour of Mercutio, serves, for example, to enhance and illustrate the

romantic and passionate character of Romeo. Even the glowing fondness and silly peevishness of the Nurse tend to relieve the soft and affectionate character of Juliet, and to place her before the audience in a point of view, which those who have seen Miss O'Neil perform Juliet, know how to appreciate. A contrast is effected, which a French author dared not attempt ; but of which every bosom at once acknowledges the power and the truth. Let us suppose, that the gay and gallant Mercutio had as little character as the walking confidant of a French hero, who echoes the hexameters of his friend in hexameters of a lower level ; or let us suppose the nurse of Juliet to be a gentle Nora, as sublime in white linen as her principal in white satin ; and let the reader judge whether the piece would gain in dignity or decorum, any thing proportioned to what it must lose in truth and interest. The audience at once sympathizes with the friendship of Romeo and Mercutio, rendered more natural and more interesting by the very contrast of their characters ; and each spectator feels as a passion, not as a matter of reflection, that desire of vengeance which impels Romeo against Tibalt ; for we acknowledge as an amiable and interesting individual, the friend whom he has lost by the sword of the Capulet. Even the anilities of the Nurse give a reality to the piece, which, whatever French critics may pretend, is much more seriously disturbed by inconsistency of manners, than by breach of their dramatic unities. "God forbid," says Mr. Puff, in the *Critic*, "that in a free country all the fine words in the language should be engrossed by the higher characters of the piece." The French critics did not carry their ideas of equality quite so far ; but they tuned the notes of their subalterns just one pitch lower than those of their principal characters, so that their language, similar in style, but lower in sentiment and diction, presents still that subordinate resemblance and correspondence to that of their superiors, which the worsted lace upon the livery of a servant bears to the embroidery upon the coat of his master.

It is not to mere expression which these remarks are confined ; for if we consult the course of human nature, we shall find that mirth and sorrow, and events which cause both, are more nearly allied than perhaps it is altogether pleasing to allow. Considered relatively to a spectator, an incident may often excite a mingled emotion, partaking at once of that which is moving, and that which is ludicrous ; and there is no reader who has not, at some period of his life, met with events at which he hesitated whether to laugh or cry. It remains to be proved, why scenes of this dubious, yet interesting description, should be excluded from the legitimate Drama, while their force is acknowledged in that of human life. We acknowledge the difficulty of bringing them upon the scene with their full and corresponding effect. It was, perhaps, under this persuasion, that the Fool, whose wild jests were too much the result of habit and practice to be subdued even by the terrors

of the storm, has been banished from the terrific scene of King Lear. But, in yielding to this difficulty, the terrible contrast has been thus destroyed, in which Shakspeare exhibited the half-perceptions of the natural Fool, as contrasted with the assumed insanity of Edgar, and the real madness of the old King. They who prefer to this living variety of emotion the cold uniformity of a French scene of passion, must be numbered among those who read for the pleasure of criticism, and without hope of partaking the enthusiasm of the poet.

While we differ from the French criticism respecting the right to demand an accurate compliance with the unities, and decline to censure that casual intermixture of comic character which gives at once reality and variety to the Drama, we are no less disposed to condemn the impertinent love-scenes, which these authors have, as a matter of etiquette, introduced into all their tragedies, however alien from the passion on which they are grounded. The French Drama assumed its present form under the auspices of Louis XIV., who aimed at combining all the characters of a hero of romance. The same spirit which inspired the dull monotony of the endless *folios* of Scuderi and Calprenede, seemed to dictate to Corneille, and even to Racine, those scenes of frigid metaphysical passion which encumbered their best plays. We do not dispute the deep interest which attaches to the passion of love, so congenial to the human breast, when it forms the ground-work of the play ; but it is intolerably nauseous to find a dull love-tale mingled as an indispensable ingredient in every dramatic plot, however inconsistent with the rest of the piece. The *Amoureux* and *Amoureuse* of the piece come regularly forth to recite their commonplaces of gallantry, in language as cold as it is exaggerated, and as inconsistent with passion and feeling as with propriety and common sense. Even the horrid tale of Œdipus has the misplaced garnishment of a love intrigue between Thesius, brought there for no other purpose, and a certain Dircé, whom, in the midst of the pestilence, he thus gallantly compliments :

“ Quelque ravage affreux qu'épale ici la peste,  
L'absence aux vrais amans est encore plus funeste.”

The predominance of a passion which expresses itself so absurdly, is all that the French have condescended to adopt from the age of chivalry, so rich in more dramatic stores ; and they have borrowed it in all its pedantry, and without its tenderness and fire. Riccoboni has probably alleged the true reason for the introduction of these heavy scenes of love intrigue, which is, that at little expense of labour to the author, they fill up three quarters of the action of his play. We quote from the French version, as that immediately before us, and most generally intelligible :

“ Par exemple, ôtons de NICOMEDE les dix scenes de LAODICE ; de

L'ŒDIPÉ, les dix scènes de DIRCE ; de POLIEUCTE, les scènes d'amour de SEVERE ; de la PHÈDRE de Monsieur Racine, les six scènes d'ARICIE, —et nous verrons que non seulement l'action ne sera point interrompue, mais qu'elle en sera plus vive ; en sorte, que l'on verra manifestement, que ces scènes de tendresses n'ont servi qu'à ralentir l'action de la pièce, à la refroidir, et à rendre les héros moins grands. Si, après ces deux meilleurs Tragedies de la France, on examine tous les autres, on connaîtra bien mieux cette vérité. Lorsque l'amour fait le sujet de la tragédie, ce sentiment, si intéressant par lui-même, occupe la scène avec raison ; j'aime l'amour de PHÈDRE, mais de PHÈDRE seule."

Under this thralldom, the fetters of the French stage long laboured, notwithstanding the noble example of *Athalie*, the *chef-d'œuvre* of Racine. By the example of Voltaire, in one or two of his best pieces, they have of late ventured occasionally to discard their uninteresting Cupid, whose appearance on the stage as a matter of course and of ceremony, produced as little effect as when his altar and godhead are depicted on the semicircle of a fan.

We have already observed, that the refined, artificial and affected character of the French tragedy, arose from its immediate connexion with the pleasures and with the presence of an absolute sovereign. From the same circumstance, however, the French stage derived several advantages. A degree of discipline, unknown in other theatres, was early introduced among the French actors ; and those of a subordinate rank, who, on the English stage, sometimes exhibit intolerable, contemptuous, and wilful negligence, become compelled, on that of France, to pay the same attention to their parts as their superiors, and to exert what limited talents they possess in the subordinate parts to which they are adapted. The effect of this common diligence upon the scene, is a general harmony and correspondence in its parts, which never fails to strike a stranger with admiration.

The Royal protection, also, early produced on the Parisian stage an improved and splendid style of scenery, decoration, and accompaniments. The scenes and machinery which they borrowed from Italy, they improved with their usual alert ingenuity. They were still further improved under the auspices of Voltaire, who had the *sole* merit of introducing natural and correct costume. Before his time the actors, whether Romans or Scythians, appeared in the full dress of the French court ; and Augustus himself was represented in a huge full-bottomed wig, surmounted by a crown of laurel. The strict national costume introduced by Voltaire is now observed. The author has also the merit of excluding the idle crowd of courtiers and men of fashion, who thronged the stage during the time of representation, and formed a sort of semicircle round the actors, leaving them thus but a few yards of an area free for performance, and disconcerting at once the performers and the audience, by the whimsical intermixture of players



and spectators. The nerves of those pedants who contended most strenuously for the illusion of the scene, and who objected against its being interrupted by an occasional breach of the dramatic unities, do not appear to have suffered from the presence of this singular Chorus.

It was not decoration and splendour alone which the French stage owed to Louis XIV. Its principal obligation was for that patronage which called forth in its service the talents of Corneille and Racine, the Homer and Virgil of the French Drama. However constrained by pedantic rules ; however held back from using that infinite variety of materials, which national and individual character presented to them ; however frequently compelled by system to adopt a pompous, solemn, and declamatory style of dialogue—these distinguished authors still remain the proudest boast of the classical age of France, and a high honour to the European republic of letters. It seems probable that Corneille, if left to the exercise of his own judgment, would have approximated more to the romantic Drama. The *Cid* possesses many of the charms of that species of composition. In the character of Don Gourmas, he has drawn a national portrait of the Spanish nobility, for which very excellence he was subjected to the censure of the Academy, his national court of criticism. In a general point of view, he seems to have been ambitious of overawing his audience by a display of the proud, the severe, the ambitious, and the terrible. Tyrants and conquerors have never sat to a painter of greater skill ; and the romantic tone of feeling which he adopts in his more perfect characters is allied to that of chivalry. But Corneille was deficient in tenderness, in dramatic art, and in the power of moving the passions. His fame, too, was injured by the multiplicity of his efforts to extend it. Critics of his own nation have numbered about twenty of his Dramas, which have little to recommend them ; and no foreign reader is very likely to verify or refute the censure, since he must previously read them to an end.

Racine, who began to write when the classical fetters were clinched and riveted upon the French Drama, did not make that effort of struggling with his chains, which we observe in the elder dramatist ; he was strong where Corneille evinced weakness, and weak in the points where his predecessor showed vigour. Racine delineated the passion of love with truth, softness, and fidelity ; and his scenes of this sort form the strongest possible contrast with those in which he, as well as Corneille, sacrificed to the dull Cupid of metaphysical romance. In refinement and harmony of versification, Racine has hitherto been unequalled ; and his *Athalie* is, perhaps, likely to be generally acknowledged as the most finished production of the French Drama.

Subsequent dramatists, down to the time of Voltaire, were contented with imitating the works of these two great models ; until the active and ingenious spirit of that celebrated author seems tacitly to have

meditated farther experimental alterations than he thought it prudent to defend or to avow. His extreme vivacity and acute intellect were mingled, as is not unfrequent in such temperaments, with a certain nervous timidity, which prevented him from attempting open and bold innovation, even where he felt compliance with existing rules most inconvenient and dispiriting. He borrowed, therefore, liberally from Shakspeare, whose irregularities were the frequent object of his ridicule ; and he did not hesitate tacitly to infringe the dramatic unities in his plays, while in his criticism he holds them up as altogether inviolable. While he altered the costume of the stage, and brought it nearer to that of national truth, he made one or two irresolute steps towards the introduction of national character. If we were, indeed, to believe the admirers of Corneille, little remained to be done in this department ; he had already, it is said, taught his Romans to speak as Romans, and his Greeks as Greeks ; but of such national discrimination foreigners are unable to perceive a trace. His heroes, one and all, talk like men of no peculiar character or distinct age and nation ; but, like the other heroes of the French dramatic school, are "all honourable men ;" who speak in high, grave, buskined rhymes, where an artificial brilliancy of language, richness of metaphor, and grandeur of sentiment, are substituted for that concise and energetic tone of dialogue, which shows at once the national and individual character of the personage who uses it. In *Mahomet*, *Alzire*, and one or two other pieces, Voltaire has attempted some discrimination of national character ; the ground-work, however, is still French ; and, under every disguise, whether of the turban of the Ottoman, the feathery crown of the savage, or the silk tunic of the Chinese, the character of that singular people can be easily recognised. Voltaire probably saw the deficiency of the national Drama with his usual acuteness ; but, like the ancient philosophers, he contentedly joined in the idolatry which he despised.

It seems, indeed, extremely doubtful, whether the French tragedy can ever be brought many steps nearer to nature. That nation is so unfortunate as to have no poetical language ; so that some degree of unnatural exaltation of sentiment is almost necessary to sustain the tone of tragedy at a pitch higher than that of ordinary life. The people are passionately fond of ridicule ; their authors are equally afraid of incurring it : they are aware, like their late ruler, that there is but one step betwixt the sublime and the ridiculous ; and they are afraid to aim at the former, lest their attempt, falling short, should expose them to derision. They cannot reckon on the mercy or enthusiasm of their audience ; and while they banish combats and deaths, and even violent action of any kind from the stage, this seems chiefly on account of the manifest risk, that a people more alive to the ludicrous than the lofty, might laugh when they should applaud. The drunken and dizzy fury with which Richard, as personated by Kean, continues to make

the motion of striking after he has lost his weapon, would be caviare to the Parisian parterre. Men must compound with their poets and actors, and pardon something like extravagance, on the score of enthusiasm. But if they are nationally dead to that enthusiasm, they resemble a deaf man listening to eloquence, who is more likely to be moved to laughter by the gestures of the orator, than to catch fire at his passionate declamation.

Above all, the French people are wedded to their own opinions. Each Parisian is, or supposes himself, master of the rules of the critical art; and whatever limitations it imposes on the author, the spectators receive some indemnification from the pleasure of sitting in judgment upon him. To require from a dancer to exhibit his agility without touching any of the lines of a diagram chalked on the floor, would deprive the performance of much ease, strength, and grace, but still the spectators of such a species of dance, might feel a certain interest in watching the dexterity with which the artist avoided treading on the interdicted limits, and a certain pride in detecting occasional infringements. In the same manner, the French critic obtains a triumph from watching the transgressions of the dramatic poet against the laws of Aristotle, equal, perhaps, to the more legitimate pleasure he might have derived from the unfettered exercise of his talents. Upon the whole, the French tragedy, though its regulations seem to us founded in pedantry, and its sentiments to belong to a state of false and artificial refinement, contains, nevertheless, passages of such perfect poetry and exquisite moral beauty, that to hear them declaimed with the art of Talma, cannot but afford a very high pitch of intellectual gratification.

The French comedy assumed a regular shape about the same period with the tragedy, and Molière was in his department what Corneille and Racine were in theirs; an original author, approached in excellence by none of those that succeeded him. The form which he assumed for a model was that of the comedy of Menander; and he has copied pretty closely some pieces from the Latin stage. Molière was endowed by nature with a rich fund of comic humour, which is nowhere more apparent than in those light pieces that are written upon the plan of the Italian masked comedy. In these he has introduced the jealous old Pantaloon, the knavish and mischievous Servant, and some of its other characters. In his regular comedy he soared to a higher pitch. Before his time the art had sought its resources in the multiplicity and bustle of intrigue, escape, and disguise,—or at best, in a comic dialogue, approaching to mere buffoonery. Molière's satire aimed at a nobler prey; he studied mankind for the purpose of attacking those follies of social life which are best exposed by ridicule. The aim of few satirists has been so legitimate, or pursued with such success. Female vanity, learned pedantry, unreasonable jealousy, the

doating and disgraceful passions of old men, avarice, coquetry, slander, the quacks who disgrace medicine, and the knaves who prostitute the profession of the law, were the marks at which his shafts were directed.

Molière's more regular comedies are limited by the law of unities, and finished with great diligence. It is true, the author found it sometimes necessary tacitly to elude the unity of place, which he durst not openly violate ; but, in general, he sacrifices probability to system. In the *Ecole des Femmes*, Arnolph brings his wife into the street, out of the room in which his jealousy has imprisoned her, in order to lecture her upon the circumspection due to her character ; which absurdity he is guilty of, that the scene may not be shifted from the open space before his door to her apartment. In general, however, it may be noticed, that the critical unities impose much less hardship upon the comic than upon the tragic poet. It is much more easy to reconcile the incidents of private life to the unities of time and place, than to compress within their limits the extensive and prolonged transactions which comprehend the revolution of kingdoms and the fate of monarchs. What influence, however, these rules do possess, must operate to cramp and embarrass the comic as well as the tragic writers ; to violate and disunite those very probabilities which they affect to maintain ; and to occasion a thousand real absurdities rather than grant a conventional license, which seems essential to the freedom of the Drama.

The later comic authors of France seem to have abandoned the track pointed out by Molière, as if in despair of approaching his excellence. Their comedy, compared with that of other nations, and of their great predecessor, is cramped, and tame, and limited. In this department, as in tragedy, the stage experienced the inconvenience arising from the influence of the Court. The varied and unbounded field of comic humour which the passions and peculiarities of the lower orders present, was prohibited, as containing subjects of exhibition too low and vulgar for a monarch and his courtiers ; and thus the natural, fresh, and varied character of comedy was flung aside, while the heartless vices and polished follies of the great world were substituted in its place. Schlegel has well observed, that the object of French comedy "is no longer life, but society ; that perpetual negotiation between conflicting vanities which never ends in a sincere treaty of peace. The embroidered dress, the hat under the arm, and the sword by the side, essentially belong to them ; and the whole of the characterisation is limited to the folly of the men and the coquetry of the women."

It is scarce in nature that a laughter-loving people should have remained satisfied with an amusement so dull and insipid as their regular comedy. A few years preceding the Revolution, and while the causes of that event were in full fermentation, the *Marriage of Figaro* ap-

peared on the stage. It is a comedy of intrigue ; and the dialogue is blended with traits of general and political satire, as well as with a tone of licentiousness, which was till then a stranger to the French stage. It was received with a degree of enthusiastic and frantic popularity which nothing but its novelty could have occasioned, for there is little real merit in the composition. Frederick of Prussia, and other admirers of the old theatrical school, were greatly scandalized at so daring an innovation on the regular French comedy. The circumstances which followed have prevented Beaumarchais' example from being imitated ; and the laughers have consoled themselves with inferior departments of the Drama. Accordingly we find the blank supplied by farces, comic operas, and dramatic varieties, in which plots of a light, flimsy, and grotesque character are borne out by the comic humour of the author and comic skill of the actor. Brunet, a comedian of extraordinary powers in this cast of interludes, has at times presumed so far upon his popularity as to season his farce with political allusions. It will scarce be believed that he aimed several shafts at Napoleon when in the height of his power. The boldness, as well as the wit of the actor, secured him the applause of the audience ; and such a hold had Brunet of their affections, that an imprisonment of a few hours was the greatest punishment which Bonaparte ventured to inflict upon him. But whatever be the attachment shown to the art in general, the French, like ourselves, rest the character of their theatre chiefly upon the ancient specimens of the Drama : and the regular tragedy, as well as comedy, seems declining in that kingdom.

As the Drama of France was formed under the patronage of the monarch, and bears the strongest proofs of its courtly origin, that of England, which was encouraged by the people at large, retains equally unequivocal marks of its popular descent. Its history must naturally draw to some length, as being that part of our essay likely to be most interesting to the reader. In part, however, we have paved the way for it by the details common to the rise of dramatic art in the other nations of Europe. We shall distinguish the English Drama as divided into four periods, premising that this is merely a general and not a precise division. The taste which governed each period, and the examples on which it is grounded, will usually be found to have dawned in the period preceding that in which it was received and established.

I. From the revival of the theatre until the great Civil War.

II. From the Restoration to the reign of Queen Anne.

III. From the earlier part of the last century down to the present reign.

IV. The present state of the British Drama.

1. The Drama of England commenced, as we have already observed,

upon the Spanish model. *Ferrex and Porrex* was the first composition approaching to a regular tragedy ; and it was acted before Queen Elizabeth, upon the 18th of January, 1561, by the gentlemen of the Inner Temple. It partakes rather of the character of a historical than of a classical Drama ; although more nearly allied to the latter class, than the chronicle plays which afterwards took possession of the stage. We have already recorded Sir Philip Sidney's commendation of this play, which he calls by the name of *Gorboduc*, from one of the principal characters. Acted by a learned body, and written in a great part by Lord Sackville, the principal author of the *Mirror for Magistrates*, the first of English tragedies assumed in some degree the honours of the learned buskin ; but although a Chorus was presented according to the classical model, the play was free from the observance of the unities ; and contains many irregularities severely condemned by the regular critics.

English comedy, considered as a regular composition, is said to have commenced with *Gammer Gurton's Needle*. This "right pithy, pleasant, and merry comedy," was the supposed composition of John Still, Master of Arts, and afterwards Bishop of Bath and Wells. It was acted in Christ-Church College, Cambridge, 1575. It is a piece of low humour ; the whole jest turning upon the loss and recovery of the needle with which Gammer Gurton was to repair the breeches of her man Hodge ; but, in point of manners, it is a great curiosity, as the *curta suppellex* of our ancestors is scarcely anywhere so well described. The popular characters also, the Sturdy Beggar, the Clown, the Country Vicar, and the Shrew, of the sixteenth century, are drawn in colours taken from the life. The unity of time, place, and action, are observed through the play, with an accuracy of which France might be jealous. The time is a few hours—the place, the open square of the village before Gammer Gurton's door—the action, the loss of the needle—and this followed by the search for, and final recovery of that necessary implement, is intermixed with no other thwarting or subordinate interest, but is progressive from the commencement to the conclusion.

It is remarkable, that the earliest English tragedy and comedy are both works of considerable merit ; that each partakes of the distinct character of its class ; that the tragedy is without intermixture of comedy ; the comedy without an intermixture of tragedy.

These models were followed by a variety of others, in which no such distinctions were observed. Numerous theatres sprung up in different parts of the metropolis, opened upon speculation by distinct troops of performers. Their number shows how much they interested public curiosity ; for men never struggle for a share in a losing profession. They acted under licenses, which appear to have been granted for the purpose of police alone, not of exclusive privilege or monopoly ; since London contained, in the latter part of the sixteenth century, no fewer

than fourteen distinct companies of players, with very considerable privileges and remunerations. See Drake's *Shakspeare and his Times*, volume II, p. 205.

The public, therefore, in the widest sense of the word, was at once arbiter and patron of the Drama. The companies of players who traversed the country, might indeed assume the name of some peer or baron, for the sake of introduction or perfection, but those of the metropolis do not, at this early period of our dramatic history, appear to have rested in any considerable degree upon learned or aristocratic privilege. The license was obtained from the crown, but their success depended upon the voice of the people, and the pieces which they brought forward, were, of course, adapted to popular taste. It followed necessarily that histories and romantic Dramas were the favourites of the period. A general audience in an unlearned age requires rather amusement than conformity to rules, and is more displeased with a tiresome uniformity than shocked with the breach of all the unities. The players and dramatists, before the rise of Shakspeare, followed, of consequence, the taste of the public; and dealt in the surprising, elevating, and often bombastic incidents of tragedy, as well as in the low humour and grotesque incidents of the comic scene. Where these singly were found to lack attraction, they mingled them together, and dashed their tragic plot with an under intrigue of the lowest buffoonery, without any respect to taste or congruity.

The clown was no stranger to the stage; he interfered, without ceremony, in the most heart-rending scenes, to the scandal of the more learned spectators

" Now lest such frightful shows of fortune's fall,  
And bloody tyrant's rage should chance appall  
And death struck audience, 'midst the silent rout,  
Comes leaping in a self misformed lout,  
And laughs and grins, and frames his mimic face,  
And jostles strught into the prince's place,  
Then doth the theatre echo all aloud,  
With gladsome noise of that applauding crowd,  
A goodly hotchpotch, where vile russetings  
Are matched with monarchs and with mighty kings."

An ancient stage-trick, illustrative of the mixture of tragic and comic action in Shakspeare's time, was long preserved in the theatre. Henry IV. holding council before the battle of Shrewsbury, was always represented as seated on a drum; and when he rose and came forward to address his nobles, the place was occupied by Falstaff; a practical jest which seldom failed to produce a laugh from the galleries. The taste and judgment of the author himself were very different. During the whole scene, Falstaff gives only once, and under irresistible temptation, the rein of his petulant wit, and it is instantly checked by the

prince ; to whom, by the way, and not to the king, his words ought to be addressed.

The English stage might be considered equally without rule and without model when Shakspeare arose. The effect of the genius of an individual upon the taste of a nation is mighty ; but that genius, in its turn, is formed according to the opinions prevalent at the period when it comes into existence. Such was the case with Shakspeare. With an education more extensive, and a taste refined by the classical models, it is probable that he also, in admiration of the ancient Drama, might have mistaken the form for the essence, and subscribed to those rules which had produced such masterpieces of art. Fortunately for the full exertion of a genius as comprehensive and versatile as intense and powerful, Shakspeare had no access to any models of which the commanding merit might have controlled and limited his own exertions. He followed the path which a nameless crowd of obscure writers had trodden before him ; but he moved in it with the grace and majestic step of a being of a superior order ; and vindicated for ever the British theatre from a pedantic restriction to classical rule. Nothing went before Shakspeare which in any respect was fit to fix and stamp the character of a national Drama ; and certainly no one will succeed him capable of establishing, by mere authority, a form more restricted than that which Shakspeare used.

Such is the action of existing circumstances upon genius, and the re-action of genius upon future circumstances. Shakespeare and Corneille was each the leading spirit of his age ; and the difference between them is well marked by the editor of the latter :—“ *Corneille est inégal comme Shakespeare, et plein de genie comme lui ; mais le genie de Corneille étoit à celui de Shakespeare ce qu'un seigneur est à l'égard d'un homme de peuple né avec le même esprit que lui.*” This distinction is strictly accurate, and contains a compliment to the English author, which, assuredly, the critic did not intend to make. Corneille wrote as a courtier, circumscribed within the imaginary rules and ceremonies of a court, as a chicken is by circle of chalk drawn round it. Shakspeare, composing for the amusement of the public alone, had within his province, not only the inexhaustible field of actual life, but the whole ideal world of fancy and superstition ;—more favourable to the display of poetical genius than even existing realities. Under the circumstances of Corneille, Shakspeare must have been restricted to the same dull, regular, and unvaried system. He must have written, not according to the dictates of his own genius, but in conformity to the mandate of some *Intendant des menus plaisirs* ; or of some minister of state, who, like Cardinal Richelieu, thought he could write a tragedy because he could govern a kingdom. It is not equally clear to what height Corneille might have ascended, had he enjoyed the national immunities of Shakspeare. Each pitched down a land-mark in his



art. The circle of Shakspeare was so extended, that it is with advantage liable to many restrictions ; that of Corneille included a narrow limit, which his successors have deemed it unlawful to extend.

It is not our intention, within the narrow space to which our essay is necessarily limited, to enlarge upon the character and writings of Shakspeare. We can only notice his performances as events in the history of the theatre—of a gigantic character, indeed, so far as its dignity, elevation, and importance are considered ; but, in respect of the mere practice of the Drama, rather fixing and sanctioning, than altering or reforming, those rules and forms which he found already established. This we know for certain, that those historical plays or chronicles, in which Shakspeare's muse has thrown a never-fading light upon the history of his country, did, almost every one of them, exist before him in the rude shape of dry dialogue and pitiful buffoonery, stitched into scenes by the elder play-wrights of the stage. His romantic Dramas exhibit the same contempt of regularity which was manifested by Marlow, and other writers ; for where there was abuse or extreme license upon the stage, the example of Shakspeare may be often quoted as its sanction, never as tending to reform it. In these particular the practice of our immortal bard was contrasted with that of Ben Jonson, a severe and somewhat pedantic scholar ; a man whose mind was coarse, though possessing both strength and elevation, and whose acute perception of comic humour was tinctured with vulgarity.

Jonson's tragic strength consists in a sublime, and sometimes harsh, expression of moral sentiment ; but displays little of tumultuous and ardent passion, still less of tenderness or delicacy, although there are passages in which he seems adequate to expressing them. He laboured in the mine of the classics, but overloaded himself with the ore which he could not, or would not, refine. His *Cataline* and *Sejanus* are laboured translations from Cicero, Sallust, and Tacitus, which his own age did not endure, and which no succeeding generation will be probably much tempted to revive. With the stern superiority of learning over ignorance, he asserted himself a better judge of his own productions, than the public which condemned him, and haughtily claimed the laurel which the general suffrage often withheld ; but the world has as yet shown no disposition to reverse the opinion of their predecessors.

In comedy, Jonson made some efforts partaking of the character of the older comedy of the Grecians. In his *Tale of a Tub*, he follows the path of Aristophanes, and lets his wit run into buffoonery, that he might bring upon the stage Inigo Jones, his personal enemy. In *Cynthia's Revells*, and *The Staple of News*, we find him introducing the dull personification of abstract passions and qualities, and turning legitimate comedy into an allegorical mask. What interest can the reader have in such characters as the three Penny boys, and their

transactions with the Lady Pecunia? Some of Jonson's more legitimate comedies may be also taxed here with filthiness of language; of which disgusting attribute his works exhibit more instances than those of any English writer of eminence, excepting Swift. Let us, however, be just to a master-spirit of his age. The comic force of Jonson was strong, marked, and peculiar, and he excelled even Shakspeare himself in drawing that class of truly English characters, remarkable for peculiarity of *humour*;—that is, for some mode of thought, speech, and behaviour, superinduced upon the natural disposition, by profession, education, or fantastical affectation of singularity. In blazoning these forth with their natural attributes and appropriate language, Ben Jonson has never been excelled. and his works everywhere exhibit a consistent and manly moral, resulting naturally from the events of the scene.

It must also be remembered that, although it was Jonson's fate to be eclipsed by the superior genius, energy, and taste of Shakspeare, yet those advantages which enabled him to maintain an honourable though an unsuccessful struggle, were of high advantage to the Drama. Jonson was the first who showed, by example, the infinite superiority of a well-conceived plot, all the parts of which bore upon each other, and forwarded an interesting conclusion over a tissue of detached scenes, following without necessary connexion or increase of interest. The plot of *The Fox* is admirably conceived; and that of *The Alchymist*, though faulty in the conclusion, is nearly equal to it. In the two comedies of *Every Man in his Humour*, and *Every Man out of his Humour*, the plot deserves much less praise, and is deficient at once in interest and unity of action, but in that of *The Silent Woman*, nothing can exceed the art with which the circumstance upon which the conclusion turns is, until the very last scene, concealed from the knowledge of the reader, while he is tempted to suppose it constantly within his reach. In a word, Jonson is distinguished by his strength and stature, even in those days when there were giants in the land; and affords a model of a close, animated, and characteristic style of comedy, abounding in moral satire, and distinguished at once by force and art, which was afterwards more cultivated by English dramatists than the lighter, more wild, and more fanciful department in which Shakspeare moved, beyond the reach of emulation.

The general opinion of critics has assigned genius as the characteristic of Shakspeare, and art as the appropriate excellence of Jonson; not, surely, that Jonson was deficient in genius, but that art was the principal characteristic of his laborious scenes. We learn from his own confession, and from the panegyrics of his friends, as well as the taunts of his enemies, that he was a slow composer: The natural result of laborious care is jealousy of fame; for that which we do with labour, we value highly when achieved. Shakspeare, on the other

hand, appears to have composed rapidly and carelessly ; and, sometimes, even without considering, while writing the earlier acts, how the catastrophe was to be huddled up, in that which was to conclude the piece. We may fairly conclude him to have been indifferent about fame who would take so little pains to win it. Much, perhaps, might have been achieved by the union of these opposed qualities, and by blending the art of Jonson with the fiery invention and fluent expression of his great contemporary. But such a union of opposite excellences in the same author was hardly to be expected ; nor, perhaps, would the result have proved altogether so favourable as might at first view be conceived. We should have had more perfect specimens of the art ; but they must have been much fewer in number ; and posterity would certainly have been deprived of that rich luxuriance of dramatic excellences and poetic beauties, which, like wild-flowers upon a common field, lie scattered profusely among the unacted plays of Shakspeare.

Although incalculably superior to his contemporaries, Shakspeare had successful imitators, and the art of Jonson was not unrivalled. Massinger appears to have studied the works of both, with the intention of uniting their excellences. He knew the strength of plot ; and, although his plays are altogether irregular, yet he well understood the advantage of a strong and defined interest ; and in unravelling the intricacy of his intrigues, he often displays the management of a master. Art, therefore, not perhaps in its technical, but in its most valuable sense, was Massinger's as well as Jonson's ; and, in point of composition, many passages of his plays are not unworthy of Shakspeare. Were we to distinguish Massinger's peculiar excellence, we should name that first of dramatic attributes, a full conception of character, a strength in bringing out, and consistency in adhering to it. He does not, indeed, always introduce his personages to the audience, in their own proper character ; it dawns forth gradually in the progress of the piece, as in the hypocritical Luke, or in the heroic Marullo. But, upon looking back, we are always surprised and delighted to trace from the very beginning, intimations of what the personage is to prove, as the play advances. There is often a harshness of outline, however, in the characters of this dramatist, which prevents their approaching to the natural and easy portraits bequeathed us by Shakspeare.

Beaumont and Fletcher, men of remarkable talent, seemed to have followed Shakspeare's mode of composition, rather than Jonson's, and thus to have altogether neglected that art which Jonson taught, and which Massinger in some sort practised. They may, indeed, be rather said to have taken for their model the boundless license of the Spanish stage, from which many of their pieces are expressly and avowedly derived. The acts of their plays are so detached from each other, in substance and consistence, that the plot scarce can be said to hang

together at all, or to have, in any sense of the word, a beginning, progress, and conclusion. It seems as if the play began, because the curtain rose, and ended because it fell; the author, in the meantime, exerting his genius for the amusement of the spectators, pretty much in the same manner as in the *Scenario* of the Italians, by the actors filling up, with their extempore wit, the scenes chalked out for them. To compensate for this excess of irregularity, the plays of Beaumont and Fletcher have still a high poetical value. If character be sometimes violated, probability discarded, and the interest of the plot neglected, the reader is, on the other hand, often gratified by the most beautiful description, the most tender and passionate dialogue; a display of brilliant wit and gaiety, or a feast of comic humour. These attributes had so much effect on the public, that, during the end of the seventeenth and beginning of the eighteenth centuries, many of Beaumont and Fletcher's plays had possession of the stage, while those of Shakspeare were laid upon the shelf.

Shirley, Ford, Webster, Decker, and others, added performances to the early treasures of the English Drama, which abound with valuable passages. There never, probably, rushed into the lists of literary composition together, a band more distinguished for talent. If the early Drama be inartificial and unequal, no nation, at least, can show so many detached scenes, and even acts, of high poetical merit. One powerful cause seems to have produced an effect so marked and distinguished; to wit, the universal favour of a theatrical public, which daily and nightly thronged the numerous theatres then open in the city of London.

In considering this circumstance, it must above all be remembered, that these numerous audiences crowded, not to feast their eyes upon show and scenery, but to see and hear the literary production of the evening. The scenes which the stage exhibited, were probably of the most paltry description. Some rude helps to the imagination of the audience might be used by introducing the gate of a castle or town;—the monument of the Capulets, by sinking a trap-door, or by thrusting in a bed. The good-natured audience readily received these hints, with that conventional allowance, which Sir Philip Sidney had ridiculed, and which Shakspeare himself has alluded to, when he appeals from the poverty of theatrical representation to the excited imagination of his audience.

"Can this cockpit hold  
The vasty fields of France? Or may we cram  
Within this wooden O, the very casques  
That did affright the air at Agincourt?  
O, pardon! since a crooked figure may  
Attest, in little space, a million:  
And let us, ciphers to this great account,  
On your imaginary forces work:  
Suppose, within the girdle of these walls

Are now confined two mighty monarchies,  
 Whose high upreared and abutting fronts  
 The perilous, narrow ocean parts asunder ;  
 Think, when we talk of horses, that you see them  
 Printing their proud hoofs i' the receiving earth.  
 For 'tis your thoughts that now must deck our kings,  
 Carry them here and there ; jumping o'er times  
 Turning the accomplishment of many years  
 Into an hour-glass."

Such are the allowances demanded by Shakspeare and his contemporaries from the public of their day, in consideration of the imperfect means and appliances of their theatrical machinery. Yet the deficiency of scenery and show, which, when existing in its utmost splendour, divides the interest of the piece in the mind of the ignorant, and rarely affords much pleasure to a spectator of taste, may have been rather an advantage to the infant Drama. The spectators, having nothing to withdraw their attention from the immediate business of the piece, give it their full and uninterrupted attention. And here it may not be premature to inquire into the characteristical difference between the audiences of the present day, and of those earlier theatrical ages, when the Drama boasted not only the names of Shakspeare, of Massinger, of Jonson, of Beaumont and Fletcher, of Shirley, of Ford ; but others of subordinate degree, the meanest of whom shows occasionally more fire than warms whole reams of modern plays. This will probably be found to rest on the varied and contrasted feelings with which the audience of ancient and that of modern days attend the progress of the scene.

Nothing, indeed, is more certain, than that the general cast of theatrical composition must receive its principal bent and colouring from the taste of the audience :

" The Drama's laws, the Drama's patrons give ;  
 For those who live to please, must please to live."

But though this be an undeniable, and in some respects a melancholy truth, it is not less certain, that genius, labouring in behalf of the public, possesses the power of reaction, and of influencing, in its turn, that taste to which it is in some respects obliged to conform ; while, on the other hand, the play-wright, who aims only to catch the passing plaudit and the profit of a season, by addressing himself exclusively to the ruling predilections of the audience, degrades the public taste still farther, by the gross food which he ministers to it ; unless it shall be supposed that he may contribute involuntarily to rouse it from its degeneracy, by cramming it even to satiety and loathing. This action, therefore, and reaction of the taste of the age on dramatic writing, and *vice versa*, must both be kept in view, when treating of the difference betwixt the days of Shakspeare and our own.

Perhaps it is the leading distinction betwixt the ancient and modern

audiences, that the former came to listen, and to admire, to fling the reins of their imaginations into the hands of the author and actors, and to be pleased, like the reader to whom Sterne longed to do homage, "they knew not why, and cared not wherefore" The novelty of dramatic entertainments (for there elapsed only about twenty years betwixt the date of *Gammer Gurton's Needle*, accounted the earliest English play, and the rise of Shakspeare) must have had its natural effect upon the audience. The sun of Shakspeare arose almost without a single gleam of intervening twilight; and it was no wonder that the audience, introduced to this enchanting and seductive art at once, under such an effulgence of excellence, should have been more disposed to wonder than to criticise, to admire—or rather to adore—than to measure the height, or ascertain the course, of the luminary which diffused such glory around him. The great number of theatres in London, and the profusion of varied talent which was dedicated to this service, attest the eagerness of the public to enjoy the entertainments of the scene. The ruder amusements of the age lost their attractions, and the royal bear-ward of Queen Elizabeth lodged a formal complaint at the feet of her majesty, that the play houses had seduced the audience from the periodical bear-butings<sup>1</sup> This fact is worth a thousand conjectures, and we can hardly doubt, that the converts, transported by their improving taste from the bear-garden to the theatre, must, generally speaking, have felt their rude minds subdued and led captive by the superior intelligence, which not only placed on the stage at pleasure all ranks, all ages, all tempers, all passions of mere humanity, but extended its powers beyond the bounds of time and space, and seemed to render visible to mortal eyes the secrets of the invisible world. We may, perhaps, form the best guess of the feelings of Shakspeare's contemporary audience, by recollecting the emotions of any rural friend of rough, but sound sense, and ardent feelings, whom we have had the good fortune to conduct to a theatre for the first time in his life. It may be well imagined, that such a spectator thinks little of the three dramatic unities, of which Aristotle says so little, and his commentators and followers talk so much; and that the poet and the performers have that enviable influence over his imagination, which transports him from place to place at pleasure; crowds years into the course of hours, and interests him in the business of each scene, however disconnected from the others. His eyes are riveted to the stage, his ears drink in the accents of the speaker, and he experiences in his mature age, what we have all felt in childhood—a sort of doubt whether the beings and business of the scene be real or fictitious. In this state of delightful fascination, Shakspeare and the gigantic dramatic champions of his age, found the British public at large; and how they availed themselves of the advantages which so favourable a temper afforded them, their works will show so

long as the language of Britain continues to be read It is true, that the enthusiastic glow of the public admiration, like the rays of a tropical sun darted upon a rich soil, called up in profusion weeds as well as flowers, and that, spoiled in some degree by the indulgent acceptance which attended their efforts, even our most admired writers of Elizabeth's age not unfrequently exceeded the bounds of critical nicety, and even of common taste and decorum But these eccentricities were atoned for by a thousand beauties, to which, fettered by the laws of the classic Drama, the authors would hardly have aspired, or, aspiring, would hardly have attained All of us know and feel how much the exercise of our powers, especially those which rest on keen feelings and self confidence, is dependent upon a favourable reception from those for whom they are put in action Every one has observed how a cold brow can damp the brilliancy of wit, and fetter the flow of eloquence, and how both are induced to send forth sallies corresponding in strength and fire, upon being received by the kindred enthusiasm of those whom they have addressed And thus, if we owe to the indiscriminate admiration with which the Drama was at first received, the irregularities of the authors by whom it was practised, we also stand indebted to it, in all probability, for many of its beauties, which became of rare occurrence, when, by a natural, and indeed a necessary change, the satiated admiration began to give way to other feelings

When a child is tired of playing with a new toy, its next delight is to examine how it is constructed, and, in like manner, so soon as the first burst of public admiration is over with respect to any new mode of composition, the next impulse prompts us to analyze and to criticize what was at first the subject of vague and indiscriminate wonder. In the first instance, the toy is generally broken to pieces, in the other, while the imagination of the authors is subjected to the rigid laws of criticism, the public generally lose in genius what they may gain in point of taste. The author who must calculate upon severe criticism, turns his thoughts more to avoid faults than to attain excellence, as he who is afraid to stumble must avoid rapid motion The same process takes place in all the fine arts their first productions are distinguished by boldness and irregularity, those which succeed by a better and more correct taste, but also by inferior and less original genius.

The original school founded by Shakspeare and Ben Jonson, continued by Massinger, Beaumont and Fletcher, Shirley, Ford, and others, whose compositions are distinguished by irregularity as well as genius, was closed by the breaking out of the great civil war in 1642 The stage had been the constant object of reprobation and abhorrence on the part of the Puritans, and its professors had no favour to expect at their hands if victorious We read, therefore, with interest, but without surprise, that almost all the actors took up arms in behalf of

their old master King Charles, in whose service most of them perished Robinson, a principal actor at the Blackfriars, was killed by Harrison in cold blood, and under the application of a text of Scripture,—“Cursed is he that doeth the work of the Lord negligently.” A few survivors endeavoured occasionally to practise their art in secrecy and obscurity, but were so frequently discovered, plundered, and stripped by the soldiers, that, “*Enter the red coat, Exit hat and cloak,*” was too frequent a stage direction. Sir William Davenant endeavoured to evade the severe zealots of the time, by representing a sort of opera, said to have been the first Drama in which moveable scenery was introduced upon the stage. Even the cavaliers of the more grave sort disapproved of the revival of these festive entertainments during the unstable and melancholy period of the interregnum. “I went,” says the excellent Evelyn, in his *Diary*, 5th May, 1658, “to see a new opera after the Italian way; in recitation, music, and scenes, much inferior to the Italian composure and magnificence, but it was prodigious that in such a time of public consternation, such a variety should be kept up or permitted, and being engaged with company, could not decently resist the going to see it, though my heart smote me for it” Davenant’s theatrical enterprise, abhorred by the fanaticism of the one party, and ill adapted to the dejected circumstances of the other, was not probably very successful.

II. With royalty, the stage revived in England. But the theatres in the capital were limited to two, a restriction which has never since been extended. This was probably by the advice of Clarendon, who endeavoured, though vainly, to stem at all points the flood of idle gaiety and dissipation which broke in after the Restoration. The example of France might reconcile Charles to this exertion of royal authority. With this restoration of the Drama, as well as of the crown, commences the second part of English dramatic history.

Charles II. had been accustomed to enjoy the foreign stage during his exile, and had taste enough to relish its beauties. It is probable, however, that his judgment was formed upon the French model, for few of the historical or romantic Dramas were revived at the Restoration. So early as 26th of November, 1662, the *Diary* of Evelyn contains this entry “I saw Hamlet, Prince of Denmark, played, but now the old plays began to disgust this refined age, since his Majesty has been so long abroad.” Dryden, Howard, and others, who obtained possession of the stage, introduced what was for some time called Heroic Plays, written in couplets, and turning upon the passions of love and honour. In the dialogue, these pieces resembled that of the French stage, where the actors declaim alternately in the best language, and in the finest thoughts, which the poet can supply; but without much trace of natural passion or propriety of character.



But though French in dialogue and sentiment, the heroic plays were English in noise and bustle, and the lack of truth and nature was supplied by trumpets and tempests, victories, and processions. An entertainment of a character so forced and unnatural, was obviously of foreign growth, and flowed from the court. Dryden himself has assured us, "that the favour which heroic plays had acquired upon the stage, was entirely owing to the countenance which they had received at court, and that the most eminent persons for wit and humour in the royal circle had so far honoured them, that they judged no way so fit as verse to entertain a noble audience, or express a noble passion." In these pieces the unities were not observed but in place of the classical restrictions, there were introduced certain romantic whimsical limitations of the dramatic art, which, had they been adopted, must soon have destroyed all its powers of pleasing. The characters were avowedly formed upon the model of the French romance, where honour was a sort of insane gasconading extravagance, and who seem to have made a vow never to speak or think of anything but love, and that in language sometimes ingeniously metaphysical, sometimes puerile to silliness, sometimes mad even to raving, but always absurd, unnatural, and extravagant. In point of system it was stated, that a heroic play should be an imitation of a heroic poem. The laws of such compositions did not, it was said, dispense with those of the elder Drama but exalted them, and obliged the poet to draw all things as far above the ordinary proportion of the stage, as the stage itself is beyond the common words and actions of human life. The effects which a heroic play, constructed upon such an overstrained model, produced, is well described by Mrs. Evelyn, wife of the author of that name already quoted, in a letter to *Mr. Bohun*, written in 1671. "Since my last to you I have seen the *Siege of Grenada*, a play so full of ideas, that the most refined romance I ever read is not to compare with it. Love is made so pure, and valour so nice, that one would imagine it designed for a Utopia rather than our stage. I do not quarrel with the poet, but admire one born in the decline of morality should be able to feign such exact virtue; and as poetic fiction has been instructive in former ages, I wish this the same event in ours. As to the strict law of comedy I dare not pretend to judge. Some think the division of the story not so well as if it could all have been comprehended in the day of action. Truth of history, exactness of time, possibilities of adventures, are niceties which the ancient critics might require, but those who have outdone them in fine notions may be allowed the liberty to express them their own way, and the present world is so enlightened that the old *dramatique* must bear no sway. This account perhaps is not enough to do *Mr. Dryden* right, yet is as much as you can expect from the leisure of one who has the care of a nursery" (See Evelyn's *Works*.) This ingenious lady felt what, overawed by the fashion of

the moment, she has intimated rather than expressed : namely, that the Heroic Drama, notwithstanding the fine poetry of which it may be made the vehicle, was overstrained, fantastical, and unnatural.

In comedy, also, there was evinced, subsequent to the Restoration, a kindred desire of shining in dialogue, rather than attempting the humorous delineation of character of which Shakspeare, Jonson, and the earlier school, had set the example. The comic author no longer wrote to move the hearty laugh of a popular assembly, but to please a fashionable circle, "the men of wit and pleasure about town;" with whom wit and raillery is always more prevailing than humour. As in tragedy, therefore, the authors exhausted trope and figure, and reduced to logic the language of heroic passion; so in comedy, a succession of smart jests, which never served to advance the action of the piece, or to display the character of the speaker, were bandied to and fro upon the stage.

Satire is the appropriate corrective of extravagance in composition, and *The Rehearsal* of the Duke of Buckingham, though it can scarcely be termed a work of uncommon power, had yet the effect of holding up to public ridicule, the marked and obvious absurdities of the revived Drama in both its branches. After the appearance of this satire, a taste too extravagant for long endurance was banished from the theatre; both tragedy and comedy retraced their steps, and approached more nearly to the field of human action, passion, and suffering; and down to the Revolution, a more natural style of Drama occupied the stage. It was supported by men of the highest genius; who, but for one great leading error, might perhaps have succeeded in giving to the art its truest and most energetic character. The talents of Otway, in his scenes of passionate affection, rival, at least, and sometimes excel, those of Shakspeare. More tears have been shed, probably, for the sorrows of Belvidera and Monimia, than for those of Juliet and Desdemona. The introduction of actresses upon the stage was scarce known before the Restoration, and it furnished the poets of the latter period with appropriate representatives for their female characters. This more happy degree of personification, as it greatly increased the perfection of the scene, must have animated, in proportion, the genius of the author. A marked improvement, therefore, may be traced in love scenes, and, indeed, in all those wherein female characters are introduced; that which was to be spoken by a fitting representative was, of course, written with more care, as it was acted with greater effect. This was an advantage, and a great one, possessed by the theatre succeeding the Restoration. Great dramatic force and vigour marked the dramatic compositions of this age. It was not indeed equal to those of Shakspeare, either in point of the talent called forth, or the quantity of original poetry given to the public; but Otway, and even Lee, notwithstanding his bombastic rant, possessed considerable knowledge of

dramatic art and of stage-effect. Several plays of this period have kept possession of the stage; less, perhaps, on account of intrinsic merits, than because some of the broad errors of the earlier age had been removed, and a little more art had been introduced in the combination of the scenes, and disentanglement of the plot. The voice of criticism was frequently heard; the dramatic rules of the ancients were known and quoted; and though not recognised in their full extent, had some influence in regulating the action of the Drama.

In one heinous article, however, the poets of this age sinned at once against virtue, good taste, and decorum; and endangered, by the most profligate and shameless indecency, the cause of morality, which has been often considered as nearly allied with that of the legitimate Drama. In the first period of the British stage, the actors were men of decent character, and often acquired considerable independence. The women's parts were acted by boys. Hence, although there were too many instances of low and licentious dialogue, there were few of that abominable species which addresses itself not to the fancy, but to the passions; and is seductive, instead of being ludicrous. Had Charles II. borrowed from the French monarchy the severe etiquette of their court, when he introduced into England something resembling the style of their plays, he would have asserted what was due to his own dignity, and the cause of sound morals and good manners, by prohibiting the vulgar and degrading license, which in itself was insulting to the presence of a king. It was, however, this prince's lot, in the regulation of his amusements, as well in his state government, to neglect self-respectability. In his exile, he had been "merry, scandalous, and poor;" had been habituated to share familiarly coarse jests and loose pleasures with his dissolute companions; and, unfortunately, he saw no reason for disusing the license to which he had accustomed himself, when it was equally destructive to his own character and to decorum. What had been merely coarse was, under his influence, rendered vicious and systematic impurity. Scenes, both passionate and humorous, were written in such a style, as if the author had studied, whether the grave seduction of the heroic, or the broad infamy of the comic scenes, should contain the grossest insult to public decency. The female performers were of a character proper to utter whatever ribaldry the poet chose to put into their mouths; and, as they practised what they taught, the King himself, and the leading courtiers, formed connexions which gave the actresses a right to be saucy in their presence, and to reckon upon their countenance when practising in public the effrontery which marked their intercourse in private life. How much this shocked the real friends of Charles, is shown by its effects upon Evelyn, whose invaluable *Diary* we have already quoted:—"This night was acted my Lord Broghill's tragedy, called *Mustapha*, before their Majesties at court, at which I was present; though very seldom now going to the public theatres, for many

reasons, as they are now abused to an atheistical liberty. Foul and indecent women now, and never till now, are permitted to appear and act, who, inflaming several young noblemen and gallants, became their misses and some their wives—witness the Earl of Oxford, Sir R. Howard, P. Rupert, the Earl of Dorset, and another greater person than any of them, who fell into their snares, to the reproach of their noble families, and ruin of both body and soul.” He elsewhere repeatedly expresses his grief and disgust at the pollution and degeneracy of the stage. (*Evelyn's Works*, vol. i., p. 392.) In a letter to Lord Cornbury (son of the great Clarendon) he thus expresses himself :—“ In the town of London, there are more wretched and indecent plays permitted than in all the world besides ;” and adds, shortly after, “ If my Lord Chancellor would but be instrumental in reforming this one exorbitancy, it would gain both the King and his Lordship multitudes of blessings. You know, my Lord, that I (who have written plays, and am a scurvy poet, too, sometimes) am far from Puritanisme ; but I would have no reproach left our adversaries, in a theme which may so conveniently be reformed. Plays are now with us become a licentious exercise, and a vice, and neede severe censors, that should look as well to their morality, as to their lines and numbers.”—And, at the hazard of multiplying quotations, we cannot suppress the following,—1st March, 1671 :—“ I walked with him (the King) through St. James's Park, to the garden, where I both heard and saw a very familiar discourse betwixt — (*i.e.* the King) and Mrs. Nelly (Gwyn) as they called an impudent comedian, she looking out of her terrace at the top of the wall, and — (the King) standing in the green walk under it. I was heartily sorry at this scene.”

The foul stain, so justly censured by a judge so competent, and so moderate as Evelyn, was like that of the leprosy in the Levitical Law, which sunk into and pervaded the very walls of the mansion ; it became the leading characteristic of the English theatre, of its authors, and of its players. It was, however, especially in comedy that this vice was most manifest ; and, to say truth, were not the eyes of antiquaries, like the ears of confessors, free from being sullied by the impurities subjected to them, the comedies of this period, as well as the comic scenes introduced to relieve the tragedies, are fitter for a brothel, than for the library of a man of letters.

It is a pity that we are under the necessity of drawing the character of the Drama, at this age, from a feature so coarse and disgusting. Unquestionably, as the art in other respects made progress, it might, but for this circumstance, have reached an uncommon pitch of perfection. The comedies of Congreve contain, probably, more wit than was ever before embodied upon the stage ; each word was a jest, and yet so characteristic, that the repartee of the servant is distinguished from that of the master ; the jest of the coxcomb from that of the

humourist or fine gentleman of the piece. Had not Sheridan lived in our own time, we could not have conceived the possibility of rivalling the comedies of Congreve. This distinguished author understood the laws of composition, and combined his intrigue with an art unusual on the British stage. Nor was he without his rivals, even where his eminence was most acknowledged. Vanburgh and Farquhar, inferior to Congreve in real wit, and falling into the next period, were perhaps his equals in the composition of acting plays. Like other powerful stimulants, the use of wit has its bounds, which Congreve is supposed sometimes to have exceeded. His dialogue keeps the attention too much upon the stretch, and, however, delightful in the closet, fatigues the mind during the action. When you are perpetually conscious that you lose something by the slightest interruption of your attention, whether by accident or absence of mind, it is a state of excitement too vivid and too constant to be altogether pleasant; and we feel it possible, that we might sometimes wish to exchange a companion of such brilliant powers, for one who would afford us more repose and relaxation.

The light, lively, but somewhat more meagre dialogue of the later dramatists of the period, and of that which succeeded, was found sufficient to interest, yet was not so powerful as to fatigue, the audience. Vanburgh and Farquhar seem to have written more from the portraits of ordinary life; Congreve from the force of his own conception. The former, therefore, drew the characters of men and women as they found them; selected, united, and heightened for the purpose of effect; but without being enriched with any brilliancy foreign to their nature. But all the personages of Congreve have a glimpse of his own fire, and of his own acuteness. He could not entirely lay aside his quick powers of perception and reply, even when he painted a clown or a coxcomb; and all that can be objected, saving in a moral sense, to this great author, is, his having been too prodigal of his wit; a faculty used by most of his successors with rigid economy.

That personification of fantasy or whim, called characters of humour, which Ben Jonson introduced, was revived during this period. Shadwell, now an obscure name, endeavoured to found himself a reputation, by affecting to maintain the old school, and espousing the cause of Ben Jonson against Dryden and other innovators. But although there was considerable force of humour in some of his forgotten plays, it was Wycherly upon whom fell the burden of upholding the standard of the Jonsonian school. *The Plain Dealer* is, indeed, imitated from Molière; but the principal character has more the force of a real portrait, and is better contrasted with the perverse, bustling, masculine, pettifogging, and litigious character of Widow Blackacre, than Alceste is with any of the characters in *The Misanthrope*. The other plays of this author are marked by the same strong and forcible painting, which approaches more to the satire of Jonson, than to the

ease of Vanburgh, the gaiety of Farquhar, or the wit of Congreve. Joining, however, the various merits of these authors, as belonging to this period, they form a galaxy of comic talent, scarcely to be matched in any other age or country ; and which is only obscured by those foul and impure mists, which their pens, like the raven wings of Sycorax, had brushed from fen and bog.

Morals repeatedly insulted, long demanded an avenger ; and he arose in the person of Jeremy Collier. It is no disgrace to the memory of this virtuous and well-meaning man, that, to use the lawyer's phrase, he pleaded his cause too high ; summoned, unnecessarily, to his aid the artillery with which the Christian fathers had fulminated against the Heathen Drama ; and, pushing his arguments to extremity, directed it as well against the use as the abuse of the stage. Those who attempted to reply to him, availed themselves, indeed, of the weak parts of his arguments ; but upon the main points of impeachment, the poets stood self-convicted. Dryden made a manly and liberal submission, though not without some reflections upon the rudeness of his antagonist's attacks :

" I shall say the less of Mr. Collier, because in many things he has taxed me justly ; and I have pleaded guilty to all thoughts and expressions of mine, which can be truly accused of obscenity, profaneness, or immorality, and retract them. If he be my enemy, let him triumph ; if he be my friend, as I have given him no occasion to be otherwise, he will be glad of my repentance. It becomes me not to draw my pen in the defence of a bad cause, when I have so often drawn it for a good one. Yet it were not difficult to prove, that, in many places, he has perverted my meaning by his glosses, and interpreted my words into blasphemy and bawdry, of which they were not guilty ; besides, that he is too much given to horseplay in his raillery, and comes to battle like a dictator from the plough. I will not say, ' The zeal of God's house has eaten him up ; ' but I am sure, it has devoured some part of his good manners and civility."

Congreve, less prudent, made an angry and petulant defence, yet tacitly admitted the charge brought against him, by retrenching, in the future editions of his plays, passages of grossness and profaneness, which the restless antiquary still detects in the early copies. And, on the whole, Collier's satire was attended with such salutary effects, that men started at the mass of impudence and filth, which had been gradually accumulated in the theatre, during the last reigns ; and if the Augean stable was not sufficiently cleansed, the stream of public opinion was fairly directed against its conglomerated impurities. Since that period, indecency, that easy substitute for wit and pleasantry, has been gradually banished from the Drama, where the conversation is now (according to Sheridan) at least always moral, if not entertaining.

During the second period of the British Drama, great improvement was made in point of art. The principles of dramatic composition were more completely understood, and the poets themselves had writ-

ten so much upon the subject, that, as Dryden somewhere complains, they had taught their audience the art of criticising their performances. They did not, however, so far surrender the liberties and immunities of their predecessors, as to receive laws from the French critics. The rules of the unities were no farther adopted by Otway, Congreve, and the writers of their time, than their immediate purpose admitted. It was allowed, on all hands, that unnecessary and gross irregularities were to be avoided, but no precise rule was adopted; poets argued upon the subject according to caprice, and acted according to convenience. Gross and palpable extensions of time, and frequent changes of place, were avoided; and, unless in tragi-comedies, authors studied to combine the intrigue of their play into one distinct and progressive action. The genius by which this art was supported, was neither so general nor so profuse as that which decorated the preceding period. It was enough, however, to support the honour of the Drama, and if the second period has produced fewer masterpieces of talent, it has exhibited more plays capable of being acted.

III In the third period of dramatic history, the critics began to obtain an authority for which they had long struggled, and which might have proved fatal to the liberties of the stage. It is the great danger of criticism, when laying down abstract rules without reference to any example, that these regulations can only apply to the form, and never to the essence of the Drama. They may assume, that the plot must be formed on a certain model, but they cannot teach the spirit which is to animate its progress. They cannot show how a passion should be painted, but they can tell to a moment when the curtain should be dropped. The misfortune is, that, while treating of these subordinate considerations, critics exalt them to an undue importance, in their own minds and that of their scholars. What they carve out for their pupils is a mere dissection of a lifeless form; the genius which animated it escapes, as the principle of life glided from the scalpel of those anatomists who sought to detect it in the earlier days of that art. Rymer had, as early as 1688, discovered that our poetry of the last age was as rude as its architecture. "One cause thereof," he continues, "might be, that Aristotle's *Treatise of Poetry* has been so little studied amongst us, it was, perhaps, commented upon by all the great men in *Italy*, before we well knew (on this side of the Alps) that there was such a book in being." Accordingly, Rymer endeavours to establish what he calls the Rule of Reason over Fancy, in the contrivance and economy of a play. "Those who object to this subjugation," he observes, "are mere fanatics in poetry, and will never be saved by their good works." The species of reason, however, to which Rymer appeals, resembles, in its occult nature, that which lies hidden in the depths of the municipal law, and which is better known to the common

class of mankind under the name of Authority. Because Aristotle assigns Pity and Terror as the objects of tragedy, Rymer resumes the proposition, that no other source of passion can be legitimate. To this he adds some arbitrary rules, of which it would be difficult to discover the *rationale*. It was the opinion, we are told, of the ancients, "that Comedy (whose province was humour and ridiculous matter only) was to represent worse than the truth, History to describe the truth, but Tragedy was to invent things better than the truth. Like good painters, they must design their images like the life, but yet better and more beautiful than the life. The malefactor of tragedy must be a better sort of malefactor than those that live in the present age : For an obdurate, impudent, and impenitent, malefactor, can neither move compassion nor terror nor be of any imaginable use in tragedy." It would be difficult to account for these definitions upon any logical principle, and impossible for an admirer of the Drama to assent to a rule which would exclude from the stage Iago and Richard III. It is equally difficult to account for the *rationale* of the following dogmata : "If I mistake not, in poetry no woman is to kill a man, except her quality gives her the advantage above him ; nor is a servant to kill his master ; nor a private man, much less a subject, to kill a king, nor on the contrary. Poetical decency will not suffer death to be dealt to each other by such persons, whom the laws of duel allow not to enter the lists together." (Rymer's *View of the Tragedies of the Last Age*.) Though for these, and similar critical conceits, it would be difficult to find any just principle, nevertheless, Rymer, Dennis, and other critics, who, mixing observations founded on sound judgment and taste, and others which rested merely upon dauntless assertion, or upon the opinions of Aristotle, began thereby to extend their authority, and produce a more than salutary influence upon the Drama. It is true, that both of the aristarchs whom we have named were so ill-advised as themselves to attempt to write plays, and thereby most effectually proved, that it was possible for a Drama to be extremely regular, and at the same time, intolerably dull. Gradually, however, their precepts, in despite of their example, gained influence over the stage. They laid down rules in which the audience were taught to regard the trade of a connoisseur as easy and soon learned ; and the same quantity of technical jargon which, in the present day, constitutes a judge of painting was, in the beginning of the eighteenth century, sufficient to elevate a Templar into a dramatic critic. The court of criticism, though self-constituted, was sufficiently formidable, since they possessed the power of executing their own decrees. Many authors made their submission ; and, amongst others, Congreve humbled himself in the *Mourning Bride*, and Addison, with anxious and constitutional timidity, sacrificed to the unities in his celebrated tragedy of *Cato*. Being in form and essence rather a French than an English



play, it is one of the few English tragedies which foreigners have admired. It was translated into Italian, and admired as a perfect model by Riccoboni, although his taste condemns the silly love intrigue. Its success was contagious. Southerne and Rowe may be considered as belonging to the same school; although the former admired Shakspeare, and the latter formed himself, in some degree, on the model of Otway. Translations of French tragedies became every day more frequent; and their diction and style of dialogue was imitated upon the British stage. The language of tragedy no longer expressed human passion, or intimated what the persons of the Drama actually felt, but described and debated, alternately, what they ought to feel; and sounding sentences, and long similes, exhibiting an active fancy and a cold imagination, supplied the place of force and of pathos.

The line between comedy and tragedy was now strictly drawn. The latter was no longer permitted to show that strain of heroic humour which exhibits itself in the character of Falconbridge, Hotspur, and Henry V., as well as Mercutio. All was to be cold and solemn, and in the same key of dull, grave state. Neither was comedy relieved by the touches of pathetic tenderness, and even sublimity, which are to be found in the romantic plays of the earlier period. To compensate the audience for the want of this beautiful variety of passion and feeling, Southerne, as Otway had done before him, usually introduces a few scenes of an under-plot, containing the most wretched and indecent farce, which was so slightly and awkwardly dovetailed into the original tragedy, that they have since been cancelled as impertinent intrusions, without being so much as missed. Young, Thomson, and others, who followed the same wordy and declamatory system of composition, contributed rather to sink than to exalt the character of the stage. The two first were both men of excellent genius, as their other writings have sufficiently testified; but, as dramatists, they wrought upon a false model, and their productions are of little value.

It is a remarkable instance of the decay of dramatic art at this period, that several of the principal authors of the time felt themselves at liberty to write imitations of old plays belonging to the original school, by way of adapting them to the taste of their own age. *The Fair Penitent* of Rowe is well known as a poor imitation of Massinger's *Fatal Dowry*. It does not greatly excel the original in the management and conduct of the piece; and, in every thing else, falls as far beneath it as the baldest translation can sink below the most spirited original.

It would appear that the players of this period had adopted a mode of acting correspondent to the poetical taste of the time. Declamation seems to have been more in fashion in the school of Booth and Betterton than that vivacity of action which exhibits at once, with word, eye, and gesture, the immediate passion which it is the actor's part to

express. "I cannot help," says Cibber, "in regard to truth, remembering the rude and riotous havoc we made of all the late dramatic honours of the theatre ! all became at once the spoil of ignorance and self-conceit ! Shakspeare was defaced and tortured in every signal character ; *Hamlet* and *Othello* lost, in one hour, all their good sense, their dignity, and fame ; *Brutus* and *Cassius* became noisy blusterers, with bold unmeaning eyes, mistaken sentiments, and turgid elocution !" (Cibber's *Memoirs*.)

A singular attempt to deviate from the prevailing taste in tragedy was made by Lillo, with the highly laudable purpose of enlarging the dramatic utility. He conceived that plays founded upon incidents of private life, might carry more immediate conviction to the mind of the hearers, and be the means of stifling more vices in the bud, than those founded on the more remote and grander events of history. Accordingly, he formed his plots from domestic crimes, and his characters never rose above the ranks of middle life. Lillo had many requisites for a tragedian ; he understood, either from innate taste, or critical study, the advantage to be derived from a consistent fable ; and, in the tragedy of the *Fatal Curiosity*, he has left the model of a plot, in which, without the help of any exterior circumstances, a train of events operating upon the characters of the dramatic persons, produce a conclusion at once the most dramatic and the most horrible that the imagination can conceive. Neither does it appear that, as a poet, Lillo was at all inferior to others of his age. He possessed a beautiful fancy ; and much of his dialogue is as forcibly expressed as it is well conceived. On some occasions, however, he sinks below his subject ; and on others, he appears to be dragged down to the nether sphere in which it is laid, and to become cold and creeping, as if depressed with the consciousness that he was writing upon a mean subject. *George Barnwell* never rises above an idle and profligate apprentice ; Millwood's attractions are not beyond those of a very vulgar woman of the town ; Thoroughgood, as his name expresses, is very worthy and very tiresome ; and there is positively nothing to redeem the piece, excepting the interest arising from a tale of horror, and the supposed usefulness of the moral. The *Fatal Curiosity* is a play of a very different cast, and such as might have shaken the Grecian stage, even during the reign of terror. But the powers of the poet prove unequal to the concluding horrors of his scene. Old Wilmot's character, as the needy man who had known better days, exhibits a mind naturally good, but prepared for acting evil, even by the evil which he has himself suffered, and opens in a manner which excites the highest interest and expectation. But Lillo was unable to sustain the character to the close. After discovering himself to be the murderer of his son, the old man falls into the common cant of the theatre ; he talks about computing sands, increasing the noise of thunder, adding water to the sea,

and fire to Etna, by way of describing the excess of his horror and remorse, and becomes as dully desperate, or as desperately dull, as any other despairing hero in the last scene of a fifth act

During the third period of the Drama, Comedy underwent several changes. The department called genteel comedy, where the persons as well as the foibles ridiculed, were derived chiefly from high life, assumed a separate and distinct existence from that which ransacked human nature at large for its subject. Like the tragedy of the period, this particular species of comedy was borrowed from the French. It was pleasing to the higher classes, because it lay within their own immediate circle, and turned upon the topics of gallantry, persiflage, affectation, and raillery. It was agreeable to the general audience, who imagined they were thereby admitted into the presence of their betters, and enjoyed their amusement at their expense. The *Careless Husband* of Cibber, is, perhaps, the best English play on this model. The general fault to which they are all liable, is their tendency to lower the tone of moral feeling, and to familiarize men, in the middling, with the cold, heartless, and selfish system of profligate gallantry practised among the higher ranks. We are inclined to believe, that in a moral point of view, genteel comedy, as it has been usually written, is more prejudicial to public morals than plays, the tendency of which seems at first more grossly vicious. It is not so probable that the *Beggar's Opera* has sent any one from the two shilling gallery to the highway, as that a youth entering upon the world, and hesitating between good and evil, may be determined to the worse course, by the gay and seductive example of *Lovemore* or *Sir Charles Easy*. At any rate, the tenderness with which vices are shaded off into foibles, familiarizes them to the mind of the hearer, and gives a false colouring to those crimes which should be placed before the mind in their native deformity. But the heaviness of this class of plays, and the difficulty of finding adequate representatives for those characters, which are really well drawn, are powerful antidotes to the evil which we complain of. That which is dully written, and awkwardly performed, will not find many imitators.

The genteel comedy, being a plant of foreign growth, never obtained exclusive possession of the English stage, any more than court dresses have been adopted in our private societies. The comedy of intrigue, borrowed, perhaps, originally from the Spaniards, continued to be written and acted with success. Many of Cibber's pieces, of Centlivre's and others, still retain their place on the stage. This is a species of comedy easily written, and seen with pleasure, though consisting chiefly of bustle and complicated incident, and requiring much co-operation of the dress maker, scene-painter, and carpenter. After all the bustle, however, of surprise, and disguise, and squabble; after every trick is exhausted, and every stratagem played off, the writer too

often finds himself in a labyrinth, from which a natural mode of extrication seems altogether impossible. Hence the intrigue is huddled up at random ; and the persons of the Drama seem, as if by common consent, to abandon their dramatic character before throwing off their stage-dresses. The miser becomes generous , the peevish cynic good-humoured ; the libertine virtuous ; the coquette is reformed ; the debauchee is reclaimed ; all vices natural and habitual are abandoned by those most habitually addicted to them —a marvellous reformation, which is brought about entirely from the consideration that the play must now be concluded. It was when pressed by this difficulty, that Fielding is said to have damned all fifth acts.

The eighteenth century, besides genteel comedy, and comedy of intrigue, gave rise to a new species of dramatic amusement. The Italian Opera had been introduced into this country at a great expense, and to the prejudice, as it was supposed, of the legitimate Drama. Gay, in aiming at nothing beyond a parody of this fashionable entertainment, making it the vehicle of some political satire against Sir Robert Walpole's administration, unwittingly laid the foundation of the English Opera. The popularity of his piece was unequalled ; partly owing to its peculiar humour, partly to its novelty, partly to the success of the popular airs, which everybody heard with delight, and partly to political motives. The moral tendency of *The Beggar's Opera* has been much questioned ; although, in all probability, the number of highwaymen is not more increased by the example of Macheath, than that of murderers is diminished by the catastrophe of George Barnwell. Many years ago, however, an unhappy person, rather from a perverted and misplaced ambition, than from the usual motives of want and desperation, chose, though in easy circumstances, and most respectably connected, to place himself at the head of a band of thieves and housebreakers, whose depredations he directed and shared. On the night on which they committed the crime for which he suffered, and when they were equipped for the expedition, he sung to his accomplices the chorus of *The Beggar's Opera*,—"Let us take the road" But his confederates, professional thieves, and who pursued, from habit and education, the desperate practices which Mr. B—— adopted from an adventurous spirit of profligate Quixotry, knew nothing at all of Gay, or *The Beggar's Opera* ; and in their several confessions and testimonies, only remembered something of a *flash-song*, about "turning lead to gold." This curious circumstance, while it tends to show that the Drama may affect the weak part of a mind, predisposed to evil by a diseased imagination, proves the general truth of what Johnson asserts in *The Life of Gay*, that "highwaymen and housebreakers seldom mingle in any elegant diversions , nor is it possible for any one to imagine, that he may rob with safety, because he sees Macheath reprieved on the stage."

This play is now chiefly remarkable, as having given rise to the English Opera. In this pleasing entertainment, it is understood that the plot may be light and the characters superficial, provided that the music be good, and adapted to the situation, the scenes lively and possessed of comic force. Notwithstanding the subordinate nature of this species of composition, it approaches, perhaps, more closely to the ancient Grecian Drama than any thing which retains possession of our stage. The subjects, indeed, are as totally different as the sublime from the light and the trivial. But, in the mixture of poetry and music, and in the frequent introduction of singing-characters unconnected with the business of the piece, and therefore somewhat allied to the Chorus, the English Opera has some general points of resemblance with the Grecian tragedy. This species of dramatic writing was successfully practised by Bickerstaff, and has been honoured by the labours of Sheridan.

IV. With the fourth era of our dramatic history commenced a return to a better taste, introduced by the celebrated David Garrick. The imitations of French tragedy, and the tiresome uniformity of genteel comedy, were ill adapted to the display of his inimitable talent. And thus, if the last generation reaped many hours of high enjoyment from the performances of this great actor, the present is indebted to him for having led back the public taste to the Dramas of Shakspeare.

The plays of this great author had been altogether forgotten, or so much marred and disguised by interpolations and alterations, that he seems to have arisen on the British stage with the dignity of an antique statue disencumbered from the rubbish in which it had been enveloped since the decay of the art.

But although Garrick showed the world how the characters of Shakspeare might be acted, and so far paved the way for a future regeneration of the stage, no kindred spirit arose to imitate his tone of composition. His supremacy was universally acknowledged ; but it seemed as if he was regarded as an object of adoration, not of imitation ; and that authors were as much interdicted the treading his tragic path, as the entering his magic circle. It was not sufficiently remembered that the faults of Shakspeare, or rather of his age, are those into which no modern dramatist is likely to fall ; and that he learned his beauties in the school of nature, which is ever open to all who profess the fine arts. Shakspeare may, indeed, be inimitable, but there are inferior degrees of excellence, which talent and study cannot fail to attain ; and the statuary were much to blame who, in despair of modelling a Venus like that of Phidias, should set himself to imitate a Chinese doll. Yet such was the conduct of the dramatists of Britain long after the supremacy of Shakspeare had been acknowledged. He reigned a Grecian prince over Persian slaves ; and they who adored

him did not dare attempt to use his language. The tragic muse appeared to linger behind the taste of the age, and still used the constrained and mincing measure which she had been taught in the French school. Hughes, Cumberland, and other men of talent, appeared in her service ; but their model remained as imperfect as ever ; and it was not till our own time that any bold efforts were made to restore to tragedy that truth and passion, without which declamation is only rant and impertinence. Horace Walpole, however, showed what might be done by adopting a more manly and vigorous style of composition ; and Home displayed the success of a more natural current of passion. The former, choosing a theme not only totally unfit for representation, but from which the mind shrinks in private study, treated it as a man of genius, free from the trammels of habit and of pedantry. His characters in *The Mysterious Mother* do not belong to general classes, but have bold, true, and individual features ; and the language approaches that of the first age of the English Drama. The *Douglas* of Home is not recommended by his species of merit. In diction and character it does not rise above other productions of the period. But the interest turns upon a passion which finds a response in every bosom ; for those who are too old for love, and too young for ambition, are all alike awake to the warmth and purity of maternal and filial affection. The scene of the recognition of Douglas's birth possesses a power over the affections, which when supported by adequate representation, is scarce equalled in the circle of Drama. It is remarkable that the ingenious author was so partial to this theatrical situation, as to introduce it in several of his other tragedies.

The comedy of the fourth period is chiefly remarkable for exhibiting *The Rivals* and *The School for Scandal*. Critics prefer the latter ; while the general audience reap, perhaps, more pleasure from the former ; the pleasantry being of a more general cast, the incident more complicated and varied, and the whole plot more interesting. In both these plays, the gentlemanlike ease of Farquhar is united with the wit of Congreve. Indeed, the wit of Sheridan, though equally brilliant with that of his celebrated predecessor, flows so easily, and is so happily elicited by the tone of the dialogue, that in admiring its sparkles, we never once observe the stroke of the flint which produces them. Wit and pleasantry seemed to be the natural atmosphere of this extraordinary man, whose history was at once so brilliant and so melancholy. Goldsmith was, perhaps, in relation to Sheridan, what Vanburgh was to Congreve. His comedies turn on an extravagance of intrigue and disguise, and so far belong to the Spanish school. But the ease of his humorous dialogue, and the droll, yet true conception of the characters, made sufficient amends for an occasional stretch in point of probability. If all who draw on the spectators for indulgence, were equally prepared to compensate by a corresponding degree of pleasure, they

would have little occasion to complain. The elder Colman's *Jealous Wife*, and some of his smaller pieces, are worthy, and it is no ordinary compliment, of being placed beside these master-pieces. We dare not rank Cumberland so high, although two or three of his numerous efforts retain possession of the stage. *The Wheel of Fortune* was certainly one of the best acting plays of its time; but it was perhaps chiefly on account of the admirable representative which the principal character found in Mr. John Kemble.

The plays of Foote, the modern Aristophanes, who ventured, by his powers of mimicking the mind as well as the external habits, to bring living persons on the stage, belong to this period, and make a remarkable part of its dramatic history. But we need not dwell upon it. Foote was an unprincipled satirist; and while he affected to be the terror of vice and folly, was only anxious to extort forbearance-money from the timid, or to fill his theatre at the indiscriminate expense of friends and enemies, virtuous or vicious, who presented foibles capable of being turned into ridicule. It is a just punishment of this course of writing, that Foote's plays, though abounding in comic and humorous dialogue, have died with the parties whom he ridiculed. When they lost the zest of personality, their popularity, in spite of much intrinsic merit, fell into utter decay.

Meantime dramatic composition of the higher class seemed declining. Garrick, in our fathers' time, Mrs. Siddons in ours, could neither of them extract from their literary admirers any spark of congenial fire. No part written for either of these astonishing performers has survived the transient popularity which their talents could give to almost any thing. The truth seems to be, that the French model had been wrought upon till it was altogether worn out; and a new impulse from some other quarter—a fresh turning up of the soil, and awakening of its latent energies by a new mode of culture, was become absolutely necessary to the renovation of our dramatic literature. England was destined to receive this impulse from Germany, where literature was in the first luxuriant glow of vegetation, with all its crop of flowers and weeds rushing up together. There was good and evil in the importation derived from this superabundant source. But the evil was of a nature so contrary to that which had long palsied our dramatic literature, that, like the hot poison mingling with the cold, it may in the issue bring us nearer to a state of health.

The affectation of Frederick II. of Prussia, and of other German princes, for a time suppressed the native literature, and borrowed their men of letters from France, as well as their hair-dressers,—their Dramas as well as their dressed dishes. The continental courts, therefore, had no share in forming the national Drama. To the highest circle in every nation, that of France will be most acceptable, not only on account of its strict propriety and conformity to *les convenances*, but also as se-

curing them against the risk of hearing bold and offensive truths uttered in the presence of the sovereign and the subject. But the bold, frank, cordial, and rough character of the German people at large, did not relish the style of the French tragedies translated for their stage; and this cannot be wondered at, when the wide difference between the nations is considered.

The national character of the Germans is diametrically opposite to that of the French. The latter are light, almost to frivolity, quick in seeing points of ridicule, slowly awakened to those of feeling. The Germans are of an abstracted, grave, and somewhat heavy temper; less alive to the ridiculous, and more easily moved by an appeal to the passions. That which moves a Frenchman to laughter, affects a German with sorrow or indignation; and in that which touches the German as a source of the sublime or pathetic, the quick-witted Frenchman sees only subject of laughter. In their theatres the Frenchman comes to judge, to exercise his critical faculties, and to apply the rules which he has learned, fundamentally or by rote, to the performance of the night. A German, on the contrary, expects to receive that violent excitation which is most pleasing to his imaginative and somewhat phlegmatic character. While the Frenchman judges of the form and shape of the play, the observance of the unities, and the *dénouement* of the plot, the German demands the powerful contrast of character and passion,—the sublime in tragedy and the grotesque in comedy. The former may be called the formalist of dramatic criticism, keeping his eye chiefly on its exterior shape and regular form; the latter is the fanatic, who, disregarding forms, requires a deep and powerful tone of passion and of sentiment, and is often content to surrender his feelings to very inadequate motives.

From the different temper of the nations, the merits and faults of their national theatres became diametrically opposed to each other. The French author is obliged to confine himself, as we have already observed, within the circle long since described by Aristotle. He must attend to all the decorum of the scene, and conform to every regulation, whether rational or arbitrary, which has been entailed on the stage since the days of Corneille. He must never so far yield to feeling, as to lose sight of grace and dignity. He must never venture so far in quest of the sublime, as to run the risk of moving the risible faculties of an audience, so much alive to the ludicrous, that they will often find or make it in what is to others the source of the grand or the terrible. The Germans, on the contrary, have never subjected their poets to any arbitrary forms. The division of the empire into so many independent states, has prevented the ascendancy of any general system of criticism; and their national literature was not much cultivated, until the time when such authority had become generally unpopular. Lessing had attacked the whole French theatrical system in his *Dramaturgie*, with



the most bitter raillery. Schiller brought forward his splendid Dramas of Romance and of History. Goëthe crowded the stage with the heroes of ancient German chivalry. No means of exciting emotion were condemned as irregular, providing emotion were actually excited. And there can be no doubt that the license thus given to the poet,—the willingness with which the audience submitted to the most extravagant postulates on their part, left them at liberty to exert the full efforts of their genius.

Lessing, Schiller, and Goëthe, became at once the fathers and the masters of the German theatre ; and it must be objected to these great men, that, in the abundance of their dramatic talent, they sometimes forget that their pieces, in order to be acted, must be adapted to the capabilities of a theatre ; and thus wrote plays altogether incapable of being represented. Their writings, although affording many high examples of poetry and passion, are marked with faults which the exaggeration of their followers has often carried into total extravagance. The plays of Chivalry and of History were followed by an inundation of imitations, in which, according to Schlegel, “there was nothing historical but the names and external circumstances ; nothing chivalrous but the helmets, bucklers, and swords ; and nothing of old German honesty but the supposed rudeness. The sentiments were as modern as they were vulgar ; from chivalry pieces, they were converted into cavalry plays, which certainly deserve to be acted by horses rather than men.”—(*Schlegel on the Drama.*)

It is not the extravagance of the apparatus alone, but exaggeration of character and sentiment, which have been justly ascribed as faults to the German school. The authors appear to have introduced too harshly brilliant lights and deep shadows ; the tumid is too often substituted for the sublime ; and faculties and dispositions the most opposed to each other, are sometimes described as existing in the same person.

In German comedy the same faults predominate to a greater degree. The pathetic comedy, which might be rather called domestic tragedy, became, unfortunately, very popular in Germany ; and found a champion in Kotzebue, who carried its conquests over all the continent. The most obvious fault of this species of composition is, the demoralizing falsehood of the pictures which it offers to us. The vicious are frequently presented as objects less of censure than of sympathy ; sometimes they are selected as objects of imitation and praise. There is an affectation of attributing noble and virtuous sentiments to the persons least qualified by habit or education to entertain them ; and of describing the higher and better educated classes as uniformly deficient in those feelings of liberality, generosity, and honour, which may be considered as proper to their situation in life. This contrast may be true in particular instances, and, being used sparingly, might afford a good moral lesson ;

but, in spite of truth and probability, it has been assumed, upon all occasions, by these authors, as the ground-work of a sort of intellectual jacobinism ; consisting, as Mr. Coleridge has well expressed it, "in the confusion and subversion of the natural order of things, their causes, and their effects ; in the excitement of surprise, by representing the qualities of liberality, refined feeling, and a nice sense of honour in persons and in classes of life where experience teaches us least to expect them ; and in rewarding with all the sympathies that are the dues of virtue, those criminals, whom law, reason, and religion, have excommunicated from our esteem."

The German taste was introduced upon the English theatre within these twenty years. But the better productions of her stage have never been made known to us ; for, by some unfortunate chance, the wretched pieces of Kotzebue have found a readier acceptance, or more willing translators, than the sublimity of Goëthe, the romantic strength of Schiller, or the deep tragic pathos of Lessing. They have tended, however (wretched as the model is,) to introduce on our stage a degree of sentiment, and awaken among the audience a strain of sensibility, to which before we were strangers.

George Colman's comedy of *John Bull* is by far the best effort of our late comic Drama. The scenes of broad humour are executed in the best possible taste ; and the whimsical, yet native characters, reflect the manners of real life. The sentimental parts, although one of them includes a finely wrought-up scene of paternal distress, partake of the *false* pathos of German pathos. But the piece is both humorous and affecting ; and we readily excuse its obvious imperfections, in consideration of its exciting our laughter and our tears.

While the British stage received a new impulse from a country whose literature had hitherto scarce been known to exist, she was enriched by productions of the richest native genius. A retired female, thinking and writing in solitude, presented to her countrymen the means of regaining the true and manly tone of national tragedy. She has traced its foundation to that strong instinctive and sympathetic curiosity, which tempts men to look into the bosoms of their fellow-creatures, and to seek, in the distresses or emotions of others the parallel of their own passions. She has built on the foundations which she laid bare, and illustrated her precepts by examples, which will long be an honour to the age in which they were produced, and admired ;—yet its disgrace, when it is considered that they have been barred their legitimate sphere of influence upon the public taste.

Besides this gifted person, the names of Coleridge, of Maturin, and other men of talents, throng upon our recollection ; and there is one who, to judge from the dramatic sketch he has given us in *Manfred*, must be considered as a match for Æschylus, even in his sublimest moods of horror. It is no part of our plan, however to enter upon the

criticism of our contemporaries. Suffice it to say, that the age has no reason to apprehend any decay of dramatic talent.

Neither can our actors be supposed inadequate to the representation of such pieces of dramatic art, as we judge our authors capable of producing. We have lost Mrs. Siddons and John Kemble, but we still possess Kean, Young, and Miss O'Neil ; and the stage has to boast other tragic performers of merit. In comedy, perhaps, it was never more strong. In point of scenery and decoration, our theatres are so amply provided, that they may rather seem to exceed than to fall short of what is required to form a classical exhibition.

Where, then, are we to look for that unfortunate counterbalance, which confessedly depresses the national Drama in despite of the advantages we have enumerated ? We apprehend it will be found in the monopoly possessed by two large establishments, which, unhappily for the progress of national taste, and, it is said, without any equivalent advantage to the proprietors, now enjoy the exclusive privilege of dramatic representation. It must be distinctly understood, that we attribute these disadvantages to the *system* itself, and by no means charge them upon those who have the administration of either theatre. The proprietors have a right to enjoy what the law invests in them : and the managers have probably discharged their duty to the public as honourably as circumstances would admit of ; but the system has led into errors which affect public taste, and even public morals. We shall briefly consider it as it influences, *1st*, the mode of representation ; *2dly*, the theatrical authors and performers ; and *3dly*, the quality and composition of the audience.

The *first* inconvenience arises from the great size of the theatres, which has rendered them unfit for the legitimate purposes of the Drama. The persons of the performers are, in these huge circles, so much diminished, that nothing short of the mask and buskin could render them distinctly visible to the audience. Show and machinery have therefore usurped the place of tragic poetry ; and the author is compelled to address himself to the eyes, not to the understanding or feelings of the spectators. This is of itself a gross error. Everything beyond correct costume and theatrical decorum is foreign to the legitimate purposes of the Drama, as tending to divide the attention of the audience ; and the rivalry of the scene-painter and the carpenter cannot be very flattering to any author or actor of genius. Besides, all attempts at decoration, beyond what the decorum of the piece requires, must end in paltry puppet-show exhibition. The talents of the scene-painter and the mechanist cannot, owing to the very nature of the stage, make battles, sieges, &c., anything but objects of ridicule. Thus we have enlarged our theatres, so as to destroy the effect of acting, without carrying to any perfection that of pantomime and dumb show.

*Secondly*, The monopoly of the two large theatres has operated un-

favourably both upon theatrical writers and performers. The former have been, in many instances, if not absolutely excluded from the scene, yet deterred from approaching it, in the same manner as men avoid attempting to pass through a narrow wicket, which is perpetually thronged by an importunate crowd. Allowing the managers of these two theatres, judging in the first and in the last resort, to be possessed of the full discrimination necessary to a task so difficult—supposing them to be at all times alike free from partiality and from prejudice—still the number of plays thrust upon their hands must prevent their doing equal justice to all; and must frequently deter a man of real talents, either from pride or modesty, from entering a competition, clogged with delay, solicitation, and other circumstances, "*haud subeunda ingenio suo.*" It is unnecessary to add, that increasing the number of theatres, and diminishing their size, would naturally tend to excite a competition among the managers, whose interest it is to make experiments on the public taste; and that this would infallibly secure any piece, of reasonable promise, a fair opportunity of being represented. It is by such a competition that genius is discovered.

The exclusive privilege of the regular London theatres is equally, or in a greater degree, detrimental to the performer; for it is with difficulty that he fights his way to a London engagement, and when once received, he is too often retained for the mere purpose of being laid aside, or *shelved*, as it is technically called;—rendered, that is, a weekly burden upon the pay-list of the theatre, without being produced above four or five times in the season to exhibit his talents. Into this system the managers are forced from the necessity of their situation, which compels them to enlist in their service every performer who seems to possess buds of genius, although it ends in their being so crowded together that they have no room to blossom. In fact, many a man of talent thus brought from the active exercise of a profession, to be paid for remaining obscure and inactive in London, and supported by what seems little short of eleemosynary bounty, either becomes careless of his business or disgusted with it; and stagnates in that mediocrity to which want of exercise alone will often condemn natural genius.

*Thirdly*, and especially, the magnitude of these theatres has occasioned them to be destined to company so scandalous, that persons not very nice in their taste of society, must yet exclaim against the abuse as a national nuisance. We are aware of the impossibility of excluding a certain description of females from public places in a corrupted metropolis like London; but in theatres of moderate size, frequented by the better class, these unfortunate persons would feel themselves compelled to wear a mask at least of decency. In the present theatres of London, the best part of the house is openly and avowedly set off for their reception; and no part of it which is open to the public at large is free from their intrusion, or at least from the open dis-

play of the disgusting improprieties to which their neighbourhood gives rise. And these houses, raised at an immense expense, are so ingeniously misconstructed, that, in the private boxes, you see too little of the play, and, in the public boxes, greatly too much of a certain description of the company. No man of delicacy would wish the female part of his family to be exposed to such scenes ; no man of sense would wish to put youth, of the male sex, in the way of such temptation. In London, if we would enjoy our most classical public amusement, we are braved by vice on the very threshold.

We notice these evils, without pretending to point out the remedy. If, however, it were possible so to arrange interests, that the patents of the present theatres should cover four, or even six, of smaller size, dedicated to the same purpose, we conceive that more good actors would be found, and more good plays written ; and, as a necessary consequence, that good society would attend the theatre in sufficient numbers to enforce respect to decency. The access to the stage would be rendered easy to both authors and actors ; and although this might give scope to some rant, and false taste, it could not fail to call forth much excellence, that must otherwise remain latent or repressed. The theatres would be relieved of the heavy expense at present incurred, in paying performers who do not play ; and in each maintaining three theatrical corps, for the separate purposes of tragedy, comedy, and musical pieces ; only one of which can be productive labourers on the same evening, though all must be supported and paid.

We might prove, that the drama is in itself as capable of being directed either to right or wrong purposes, as the art of printing. It is true that, even after a play has been formed upon the most virtuous model, the man who is engaged in the duties of religion will be better employed than he who is seated in a theatre, and listening to the performance.

When the necessity of daily labour is removed, and the call of social duty fulfilled, that of moderate and timely amusement claims its place, as a want inherent in our nature. To relieve this want, and fill up the mental vacancy, games are devised, books are written, music is composed, spectacles and plays are invented and exhibited. And if these last have a moral and virtuous tendency ; if the sentiments expressed are calculated to rouse our love of what is noble, and our contempt of what is base or mean ; if they unite hundreds in a sympathetic admiration of virtue, abhorrence of vice, or derision of folly ; it will remain to be shown how far the spectator is more criminally engaged, than if he had passed the evening in the idle gossip of society ; in the feverish pursuits of ambition ; or in the unsated and insatiable struggle after gain—the graver employments of the present life, but equally unconnected with our existence hereafter.

## MOLIÈRE.\*

IT will be universally admitted that in tragic performances nothing can be more distinctly different than the laws which regulate the French and English stage. The dissimilarity is so great, that a native of either country, however candid or liberal, must have studied with some attention the literature of the other, to enable him, not merely to relish, but even to endure, the tragedies of the neighbouring kingdom. A Parisian critic would be shocked at the representation of Hamlet *au naturel*, and the most patient spectator in a Drury Lane audience would incur some risk of dislocating his jaws with yawning, during the representation of a chef-d'œuvre of Racine or Corneille. This difference betwixt the taste of two highly civilized nations is not surprising, when we consider that the English tragedy existed a hundred years at least before the French, and is therefore censured by our neighbours as partaking, to a certain extent, of the barbarity and grossness of the age of Queen Elizabeth. The two great tragedians of France, on the contrary, had the task of entertaining a polished and highly ceremonious court, whose judgment was at least as fastidious as it was correct, and in whose eyes a breach of etiquette was a more formidable crime than any deficiency in spirit or genius.

Thus the English stage exhibited in word and in action every "change of many-coloured life," mingled the tragic with the comic, the ludicrous with the horrible, seized by storm on the applause of the half-startled, half-affrighted audience, and presented to the judgment, like Salvator's landscapes to the eye, a chaos of the wonderful, mixed with the grotesque, agitating the passions too strongly to leave time to inquire whether the rules of critical taste were not frequently violated. The French stage, on the other hand, is carefully and exactly limited by a sense of decorum, which, exercised in its rigour, may be called the tyranny of taste. It is not lawful to please, says this dramatic code, unless by observance of certain arbitrary rules : or to create a deeper and a more intense interest, than a strict obedience to the precepts of

\* *Œuvres de Molière avec un Commentaire, un Discours Préliminaire, et une Vie de Molière.* Par M. de l'Auger, Académie Française. 9 vols. 8vo. Paris. 1819-1827. *Histoire de la Vie et des Œuvres de Molière.* Par J. Taschereau. Paris. 1825. 8vo.

Aristotle and his modern commentators will permit. The English authors have therefore preferred exhibiting striking incidents and extraordinary characters, placed in violent contrast, at the risk of shocking probability ; and their keenest partizans must own, that they have been often absurd, when they aimed at being sublime. The French, on the other hand, limiting themselves in general to long dramatic dialogues, in which passion is rather analyzed than displayed, have sometimes become tedious by a display of ingenuity, where the spectator expected touches of feeling. It follows as a matter of course, that each country, partial to the merits of its own style of amusement, and struck with the faults which belong to a cast of composition so extremely different, is as severe in censuring the foreign stage, as it is indulgent in judging of its own. Two important questions arise out of this—first, whether, considering the many differences betwixt the taste both of nations and individuals, either country is entitled to condemn with acrimony the favourite authors of the other, merely because they did not hit a mark against which they never directed their arrows ? and, secondly, whether there may not remain to be trodden, by some splendid genius yet to be born, some middle path, which may attain the just mean betwixt that English freedom approaching to license, and the severe system of French criticism, that sometimes cramps and subjects the spirit which it is only designed to guide or direct ?

Happily for us, our present subject does not require us to prosecute an inquiry so delicate as that which we have been led to touch upon. The difference in the national tastes of France and England, so very remarkable when we compare the tragedies of the two countries, is much less conspicuous in their comic dramas ; where, setting aside their emancipation from the tenets of the Stagyrite, the English comic writers do, or ought to, propose to themselves the same object with the French of the same class. As a proof of this, we may remark, that very few French tragedies have ever been translated, and of these few (the *Zaire* of Voltaire excepted) still fewer have become permanently popular, or have been reckoned stock plays,—whereas the English authors, from the age of the great man of whom we are about to speak, down to the present day, have been in the habit of transferring to the British stage almost all the comedies which have been well received in France. How it happens, that two nations which differ so much in their estimation of the terrible or the pathetic should agree so exactly in their sense of the gay, the witty, and the humorous, is a different question, which we are not called upon to discuss very deeply. Lord Chesterfield, however, has long since remarked (with the invidious intention of silencing an honest laugh) that laughter is a vulgar convulsion, common to all men, and that a ridiculous incident, such as the member of a company attempting to sit down when he has no chair behind him, will create a

louder peal of mirth, than could be excited by the most brilliant sally of wit. We go no further with his Lordship than to agree, that the sense of the comic is far more general among mankind, and far less altered and modified by the artificial rules of society, than that of the pathetic; and that a hundred men of different ranks or different countries will laugh at the same jest, when not five of them perhaps would blend their tears over the same point of sentiment. Take, for example, the Dead Ass of Sterne, and reflect how few would join in feeling the pathos of that incident, in comparison with the numbers who would laugh in chorus till their eyes ran over at the too lively steed of the redoubtable John Gilpin. The moralist may regard this fact, either as a sign of our corrupted nature, to which the ludicrous feeling of the comic distress of a fellow-creature is more congenial than a sympathy with his actual miseries,—or as a proof of the kindness of Providence, which, placing us in a valley of sorrows, has enabled us, from our conformation, to be readily moved by such mirth-exciting circumstances as it affords, and by this propensity to counteract the depression of spirits occasioned by all that is gloomy and melancholy around us. To us it is enough to be assured, that the universal sense of the humorous renders such a complete master of comedy as Molière the property, not of that country alone which was honoured with his birth, but of the civilized world, and of England in particular, whose drama has been enriched by versions of so many of his best pieces.

As, however, we suspect that the history of this great author, the prince certainly of comic writers, is but little known to our English readers, we shall give a sketch of Molière's life from the interesting and well-told narrative of his recent biographer, Mons. Taschereau.

*Le menteur* of the Great Corneille, (known to the British reader under the title of *The Liar*;) which appeared in 1642, was perhaps the first approach to the more just and elevated species of comedy. It was, however, a translation from the Spanish, and although it must be termed a comedy founded upon character, in which the whole incidents bear regularly on each other, and tend to enhance the ridicule attached to the foible of the hero, the plot has nevertheless a strong relish of the old Spanish school, which turned upon disguises, scaling-ladders, dark-lanterns, and trap-doors. The comedies of *Don Bertrand de Cigara*, and *Le Geôlier de Soi-même*, composed by Thomas Corneille, are more distinctly and decidedly comedies of intrigue and bustle, similar to those borrowed from that exhaustless mine, the Spanish drama, where, generally speaking, at the expense of little save a wild imagination, the poet

“ —— fill'd the stage with all the crowd  
Of fools pursuing, and of fools pursued,  
Whose ins and outs no ray of sense discloses,  
Whose deepest plot is how to break folks' noses.”



We may therefore say, that, relieved occasionally by the lively absurdity of the Italian farce, the comedy of intrigue, depending for its success upon mere stage-trick and stratagem, had usurped the place of that Thalia, who was to derive her interest by the lectures which she proposed to read upon the human heart and national manners. It was then that Molière arose, to whom we can scarcely hesitate to assign the first place amongst the comic writers of any age or nation.

Jean-Baptiste Poquelin was christened at Paris, 15th January, 1622. His family consisted of decent burghers, who had for two or three generations followed the business of manufacturers of tapestry, or dealers in that commodity. Jean Poquelin, the father of the poet, also enjoyed the office of valet-de-chambre in the royal household. He endeavoured to bring his son up to the same business, but finding that it was totally inconsistent with the taste and temper of the young Jean-Baptiste, he placed him at the Jesuits' College of Clermont, now the College of Louis-le-Grand. Young Poquelin had scarcely terminated his course of philosophy, when, having obtained the situation of assistant and successor to his father, in his post of valet-de-chambre to the king, he was called on to attend Louis XIII. in a tour to Narbonne, which lasted nearly a year. Doubtless, the opportunities which this journey afforded him, of comparing the manners and follies of the royal court and of the city of Paris, with those which he found still existing in the provincial towns, and amongst the rural noblesse, were not lost upon the poet by whose satirical powers they were destined to be immortalized.

On his return to Paris, young Poquelin commenced the study of the law; nay, it appears probable, that he was actually admitted an advocate. But the name of Molière must be added to the long list of those who have become conspicuous for success in the fine arts, having first adopted the pursuit of them in contradiction to the will of their parents; and in whom, according to Voltaire, nature has proved stronger than education.

Instead of frequenting the courts, Jean-Baptiste Poquelin was an assiduous attendant upon such companies of players as then amused the metropolis, and at length placed himself at the head of a society of young men, who began by acting plays for amusement and ended by performing with a view to emolument. His parents were greatly distressed by the step he had taken. He had plunged himself into a profession which the law pronounced infamous, and nothing short of rising to the very top of it could restore his estimation in society. Whatever internal confidence of success the young Poquelin might himself feel, his chance of being extricated from the degradation to which he had subjected himself must have seemed very precarious to others; and we cannot be surprised that his relations were mortified

and displeased with his conduct. To conciliate their prejudices as much as possible, he dropped the appellation of Poquelin, and assumed that of Molière, that he might not tarnish the family name. But with what indifference should we now read the name of Poquelin, had it never been conjoined with that of Molière, devised to supersede and conceal it! It appears that the liberal sentiments of the royal court left Molière in possession of his office, notwithstanding his change of profession.

From the year 1646 to 1653, it is only known that Molière travelled through France as the manager of a company of strolling players. It is said, that with the natural turn of young authors, who are more desirous to combine scenes of strong emotion, than of comic situation, he attempted to produce a tragedy called *The Thebaid*. Its indifferent success disgusted him with the buskin, and it may be observed, that in proportion as he affects, in other compositions, anything approaching to the tragic, his admirable facility of expressions seem to abandon him, and he becomes stiff and flat.

In the year 1653 Molière's brilliant comedy of *L'Etourdi* was performed at Lyons, and gave a noble presage of the talents of its illustrious author. The piece is known to English readers by a translation entitled *Sir Martin Marplot*, made originally by the celebrated Duke of Newcastle, and adapted to the stage by the pen of Dryden. The piece turns upon the schemes formed by a clever and intriguing valet to facilitate the union betwixt his master and the heroine of the scene, all of which are successively baffled and disconcerted by the bustling interference of the lover himself. The French original has infinitely the superiority of the English imitation; not only as being the original, but because the character of the luckless lover is drawn with an exquisitely finer pencil. Lélie is an inconsequential, light-headed, gentleman-like coxcomb, but Sir Martin Marplot is a fool. In the English drama, the author seems to have considered his hero as so thoroughly stupid, that he rewards the address of the intriguing domestic with the hand of the lady. The French author gave no occasion for this gross indecorum. *L'Etourdi* was followed by *Le Dépit Amoureux*, an admirable entertainment; although the French critics bestow some censure on both for a carelessness of style, to which a foreigner may profess himself indifferent. Both these performances were received with the greatest applause by numerous audiences; and as far as the approbation of provincial theatres could confer reputation, that of Molière was now established.

There was, however, a temptation which threatened to withdraw him from the worship of Thalia. This was an offer on the part of the Prince of Conti, who had been his condisciple at college, to create Molière his secretary. He declined this, on account of his devoted at-

tachment to his own profession, strengthened on this occasion, perhaps, by his knowledge how the place had become vacant. This it seems was by the death of Sarrasin, (who had held the office,) in consequence of *un mauvais traitement de Monseigneur le Prince de Conti*. In plain English, the Prince had, with the fire-tongs, knocked down his secretary, who never recovered from the effects of the blow. It is probable that, notwithstanding the laurel chaplet worn by Molière, he had little faith in the *Sic evitabile fulmen*.

This was in 1654. He continued to perambulate the provinces with his company for several years longer; in 1658 he returned to Paris, and at last, through the influence of his patron the Prince of Conti, was introduced to Monsieur, the king's brother, and by him presented to the king and queen. On the 24th of October, his company performed in presence of the royal family, and he obtained the royal license to open a theatre under the title of *Troupe de Monsieur*, in opposition to, or in emulation of, the comedians of the Hotel de Bourgogne. The pieces which Molière had already composed were received with great favour, but it was not until 1659, that he commenced the honourable satirical war with folly and affectation which he waged for so many years. It was then that he produced *Les Précieuses Ridicules*.

To understand the purpose of this satirical drama, the English reader must be informed, that there existed at Paris a coterie of women of rank, who pretended to the most exalted refinement of thought, expression, and sentiment. These were waited upon and worshipped by a certain number of men of fashion and several literary characters, who used towards them in conducting their gallant intercourse, a peculiar strain of high-flown, pedantic gallantry, like that which was formerly in fashion in England, when every maid of honour spoke the affected jargon called Euphuism. This society met in the Hotel de Rambouillet, under the protection of the marchioness, its mistress. There were amongst them several persons of real wit and talent, a circumstance which only served to render the false taste which presided in the assembly more whimsically conspicuous. The language which the adepts of this sect piqued themselves on using, was a series of cold, far-fetched, extravagant metaphors and emblems, as remote from good taste as from common sense; and adorned with flights which resembled those of Cowley and Donne in their love verses. If wit, as Dr. Johnson observes of the metaphysical poets, consists in a combination of dissimilar images—a discovery of occult resemblances in things apparently unlike—the conversation of the Hotel de Rambouillet had more than enough of it. Their amorous intercourse was all in trope and figure; the more remote and extravagant so much the more to be applauded. The land of gallantry was graphically illustrated as a

country through which the pilgrim-lover travelled, possessing himself successively of the village of *billets-galans*, the hamlet of *billets-doux*, and the castle of *petits soins*. The expressions of real passion are always obvious and intelligible, but this pragmatism made love without interest or concern; their courtship was void of tenderness—their sorrow could excite no sympathy;—it was sufficient that they said what had never, they hoped, been said before. The whole language, or rather jargon, of the society was a succession of enigmas, the sense of which much resembled the Highlandman's horse, that could not be taken without much labour, and when caught was not worth the trouble it had given. A dictionary of this galimathias was published by Ribou, in 1661, from which, or some similar authority, Bret, the editor of Molière, quotes the following tropes of rhetoric, which cannot easily be rendered into English. A night-cap was called (the reader must divine wherefore) *le complice innocent de mensonge*—a chaplet, *une chaîne spirituelle*—water, *l'humeur celeste*—thieves, *les braves incommodés*, and a disdainful smile, *un bouillon d'orgueil*.

It might render this high strain of fashionable affectation more tolerable in one point of view, that the Cupid of the Hotel de Rambouillet affected strict Platonism, nor was there indeed much danger to be anticipated to the honour of families from the frigid affectation of his conceited jargon. The *fashion* had only the effect of making the young female aspirant treat with contempt the good man whom she chanced to call husband, for his total ignorance of the regular procedure in love matters. Such, at least, were the ostensible bounds within which these apish and fantastic tricks were practised; whether the limits were ever transgressed, is a question rather for the scandalous chronicle than the critic. To add singularity of manners to abstruseness of language and sentiment, the lady who entertained these coterie received the company in bed, and the company arranged themselves around her in the alcove where it was placed. Then flowed that inimitable tide of affected conversation, in which one ambiguous, tortuous, and metaphysical conceit gave place to another still more obscure,—where, by dint of what the circle termed delicacy of sentiment and felicity of expression, they became perfectly unintelligible, and language, instead of being put to its natural and legitimate purpose of asking and receiving information, was employed to give vent to all the nonsensical extravagances of a bizarre fancy, which resembled legitimate wit as little as a Will-of-the-Wisp is like the evening star. True wit, doubtless, (but for the time distorted and abused,) had some place in the coterie, since Sevigné, Menage, Deshouillères, L'Enclos, and other persons distinguished for talent, encouraged this absurd fashion; forgetting or neglecting the precept of a bard who himself seldom remembered it:—that it is better wit should

not be displayed at all, than that every expression should be tortured into a witticism.

There could not be more legitimate food for satire than a system of solemn pedantic foppery, which its proselytes, in the extremity of self-conceit, considered as the most refined perfection of gallantry. While this ridiculous affectation was adopted by the learned and noble, and even by prelates as well as nobles, Molière, so lately the manager of a company of strolling players, was loading that piece, the discharge of which was to disperse this flock of jackdaws in borrowed feathers.

The title of his drama was taken from one of the rules of the society at the Hotel de Rambouillet not yet alluded to. As the females were frozen towards their insipid gallants, they made amends by lavishing the extremity of tender friendship upon each other. *Ma chère, ma précieuse*, were their usual terms of endearment, and from thence the title of *Les Précieuses Ridicules*. In this celebrated piece Molière introduced two females, (daughter and niece of a worthy burgess called Gorgibus,) who having become infected with the false wit and gallantry of the *ruelles*, and having substituted, according to a fashion practised by the *élégantes* of the day, the sonorous names of *Aminte* and *Polixène* for their baptismal ones of Cathos and Madelon, with all the sentimental jargon which belonged to their new appellatives, have set themselves up as *précieuses* of the first class. They have, of course, a suitable contempt for honest Gorgibus, whose distress, perplexity, and resentment are extreme, and all occasioned by the perverse elegance of his woman-kind, who, in their attempts to emulate the follies and conceits of the incomparable Arthenice, (a romantic epithet by which Madame de Rambouillet was distinguished even in her funeral sermon,) talk in a style which he cannot comprehend, and act in a manner that leads him to doubt their sanity of mind. The proposals of two gentlemen, approved by Gorgibus, who thought them fit matches for his damsels, have been rejected with such extremity of scorn by the two princesses, that the rejected suitors determine to revenge themselves, which they do by causing their two valets, impudent conceited coxcombs of course, to be introduced to Aminte and Polixène, as men of fashion and quality. The *Précieuses* mistake the extravagant and absurd foppery, the second-hand airs of finery, and the vulgar impudence of the Marquis de Mascarille and the Vicomte de Jodelet, for the extremity of wit and gallantry : while the discovery, and the shame and confusion with which the unfortunate sentimentalists are overwhelmed, form the diverting conclusion of this amusing drama.

The piece was acted for the first time 18th November, 1659, and received with unanimous applause. The public, like children admitted behind the scenes, saw, with wonder and mirth, the trumpery which they had admired as crowns, sceptres, and royal robes, when beheld at

a distance,—thus learning to estimate, at their real value, the affected airs of super-excellence and transcendental elegance assumed by the frequenters of the Hotel de Rambouillet.

On the other hand, the party who were consequently made the laughing-stock of the theatre, were much hurt and offended, nor was the injury at all the lighter, that some of them had sense enough to feel that the chastisement was deserved. They had no remedy, however, but to swallow their chagrin, and call themselves by their own names in future. Menage expressed his own recantation in the words of Clovis, when he became a convert to Christianity, and told his assembled Franks they must now burn the idols which they had hitherto adored. The affectation of the period, such as we have described it, received a blow no less effectual than that which Ben Jonson, by his satire called "Cynthia's Revels," inflicted on the kindred folly of Euphuism; or as the author of "The Baviad and Mæviad" dealt to similar affectations of our own day. But Molière made a body of formidable enemies amongst the powerful and the learned, whose false pretensions to wit and elegance he had so rudely exposed.

Two things were remarkable as attending the representation of this excellent satire; first, that an old man, starting up in the parterre, exclaimed, "Courage, Molière, this is real comedy!" and, secondly, that the author himself, perceiving from the general applause, that he had touched the true vein of composition, declared his purpose henceforward to read his lessons from the human bosom, instead of studying the pages of Terence and Plautus.

*Les Précieuses Ridicules* has been imitated by Shadwell with considerable success in his comedy of *Bury-fair*. And here we may remark, that M. Taschereau is led, probably from the example of most English authors, to speak of this dramatist with more contempt than he deserved. Shadwell was unfortunate in being placed in rivalry with Dryden, and still more so in becoming the object of his satire. But he had a strong sense of humour, and occasionally great power in expressing it. He was the Ben Jonson of his day, however inferior to him in genius; and as a painter of manners, his works ought not to be lost sight of by the English antiquary.

Molière next produced, in 1660, *Sganarelle, ou Le Cocu Imaginaire*. His biographer, like Master Ford, in the *Merry Wives of Windsor*, censures this second title as coarse and indelicate, unpleasing to the ear as the names of Amaimon, Lucifer, and Barbason. We trust that detestation of the vice has since Molière's time introduced among his countrymen such laudable horror against the appellation of the principal sufferer. Since the days of the Italian novellieri, Boccaccio, Bandello, and the rest, their tales of intrigue had been imitated in the *Cent Nouvelles*, the *Tales of the Queen of Navarre*, and other works of a

similar kind. In all of these collections, the seductive intrigues, which carry dishonour and desolation into the bosom of families, had been exposed by the novelists, and listened to by their hearers, the courtiers of a licentious age, as fitting subjects for jest and raillery rather than crimes imperatively demanding censure. If Molière, on the present and future occasions, lent his admirable talents to the same depraved purpose of entertaining profligates by placing their guilt in a ludicrous point of view, Fortune reserved for him a severe retaliation, of which we shall speak hereafter.

After an unsuccessful effort at a serious piece, (*Don Garcie de Navarre, ou Le Prince Jaloux*), Molière resumed his natural bent ; and in *L'Ecole des Maris*, presented one of his best compositions, and at once obliterated all recollection of his failure.

It was acted at Paris with unanimous applause, and again represented at the magnificent entertainment given by the superintendent of finances, Fouquet, to Louis XIV. and his splendid court. Fouquet, at once the most opulent and the most splendid man of his time, had exhausted every species of incense which could be offered to a royal idol. The beautiful Bejart, whom Molière afterwards married, appeared as a Naiad, in a shell shaped like the chariot of a sea-goddess, and delivered an elegant compliment composed by Pelisson. Le Brun painted the decorations of the scene,—Le Nôtre laid out the surrounding architectural ornaments,—La Fontaine wrote verses,—Molière composed and performed parts which none but himself could have invented. All visible to the eye was mirth unbounded, wealth immeasurable, a mighty king receiving the homage of a devoted subject. But never was there so complete a resemblance of the banquet of Damocles. The sharp glaive, suspended by a single hair, was hanging above the head of the devoted entertainer. Accustomed, like the successful lover of Danaë, to make love in a shower of gold, the financier had found an unexpected resistance in Mademoiselle La Vallière, a beautiful young person, attached to the train of Madame, the king's sister-in-law. Provoked at his want of success, the superintendent watched so closely every motion of the lady, that he discovered he had the king for his rival. Fouquet, at this moment, was not without hopes of attaining the unbounded power possessed by the lately deceased prime minister, the Cardinal Mazarin. Yet though he nourished this distinguished ambition, his views as a courtier and statesman could not make him suppress his resentment, and, with extreme imprudence, he let La Vallière know that he was acquainted with the secret of her attachment. Indignant at the freedom of the communication, La Vallière lost no time in informing her royal lover of the discovery. It was at the period of the magnificent fête at Vaux, that the king's resentment and jealousy were roused to the highest pitch, by his seeing a portrait of Mademoiselle La Vallière in the

cabinet of the ambitious financier. He would have had him arrested and sent to prison on the spot, had not the queen-mother deterred him by the simple yet expressive words—"What! in the middle of an entertainment which he gives to you?" The punishment was only delayed till it could be less scandalous. The disgrace of the superintendent followed close on his magnificent entertainment

Besides *L'Ecole des Maris*, Molière contributed to the celebrated entertainment at Vaux a dramatic representation, called *Les Fâcheux*, consisting of a series of detached scenes, which were only designed to be acted during the intervals of a ballet, to fill the stage while the dancers were changing their dresses and characters for a new exhibition. In these scenes, a lover, who has an assignation with his mistress, is represented as successively interrupted by various importunate persons, (in modern tongue *boreds*,) who come to intrude on him their company and their follies. But out of such slender materials, what a lecture upon follies of character and manners has Molière contrived to read us!

Even the jealous fury which animated Louis did not prevent his entering into the humour of "*Les Fâcheux*," and pointing out to Molière another folly, which might augment the list of the tormenting intruders. This existed in the person of Monsieur de Soyecourt, Grand Veneur or Great Huntsman to the King, wildly and exclusively attached to the pleasures of the chase. The royal hunt was not neglected, but it became necessary, in order to acquire the terms of the chase necessary to be placed in the mouth of the new character, that Molière should apply to Monsieur de Soyecourt himself, who with unsuspecting good-nature, furnished the comedian with an ample vocabulary of the phrases destined to render himself ridiculous. The scene which Molière composed on this occasion exhibits a strong contrast betwixt French and English manners. Dorante is a courtier devoted to the chase, who insists upon telling Eraste a long story about a late hunting-match in which he was engaged; and which was broken off by a country gentleman, who, against all the rules of *venerie*, shot the stag dead with a pistol. In England, such a country gentleman as Squire Western would have understood hunting better than all the nobles of the court of St James's.

M. Taschereau observes, that in one scene of this little unconnected string of scenes, which nevertheless has more wit and nature in it than most regular comedies, the poet has shown his philosophy as well as his power of comedy. It is where he recognizes the efforts of the King to put a stop to the Gothic and barbarous custom of duelling. "It is an example which ought to teach poets how to employ the influence they possess over the human heart." We subscribe to the opinion, yet must add that it was also a high and exquisite touch of



flattery, although very properly introduced in the only drama which Molière inscribed to Louis XIV.

*L'Ecole des Femmes* was Molière's next work of importance. It is a comedy of the highest order. An old gentleman, who had been an intriguer in his youth, and knew (as he flattered himself,) all the wiles of womankind, endeavours to avoid what he considers as the usual fate of husbands, by marrying his ward, a beautiful girl, simple almost to silliness, but to whom nature has given as much of old mother Eve's talent for persuasion and imposition as enables her to baffle all the schemes of her aged admirer, and unite herself to a young gallant more suited to her age. The "Country Wife" of Wycherly is an imitation of this piece, with the demerit on the part of the English author of having rendered licentious a plot which in Molière's hands is only gay.

Although this piece was well received and highly applauded, it was at the same time severely criticised by those who had swallowed without digesting the ridicule which the author had heaped on the Hotel de Rambouillet in the "Précieuses Ridicules," and on the various conceits and follies of the court in "Les Fâcheux." Such critics having shown themselves too wise to express the pain which they felt on their own account, now set up as guardians of the purity of the national morals, and of the national language. A naïve expression used by Agnès was represented as depraving the one; a low and somewhat vulgar phrase was insisted upon as calculated to ruin the other. This affected severity in morals and grammar did not impose on the public, who were quite aware of the motive of critics who endeavoured to ground such formidable charges on foundations so limited. The celebrated Boileau drew his pen in defence of his friend, in whose most burlesque expression there truly lurked a learned and useful moral. "Let the envious exclaim against thee," he said, "because thy scenes are agreeable to all the vulgar; if thou wert less acquainted with the art of pleasing, thou wouldst be enabled to please even thy censors." Molière himself wrote a defence of "*L'Ecole des Femmes*," "in which," says M. Tschereau, "he had the good fortune to escape the most dangerous fault of an author writing upon his own compositions, and to exhibit wit, where some people would only have shown vanity and self-conceit."

The wrath of these paltry and prejudiced critics proceeded beyond all the bounds of literary censure. The Duc de la Feuillade, supposed to be the original of a ridiculous man of quality introduced by Molière in his *Critique de l'Ecole des Femmes*, was guilty of an action equally unbecoming and brutal, considering that the aristocratic laws of the French society of the day left him at liberty to put a personal affront on the manager of a theatre, whatever his genius or respectability, without being exposed to render him a personal account. He met Molière in one of the galleries of the Tuilleries, and assuming the ap-

pearance of one who wished to embrace and salute him—then no uncommon compliment—he seized rudely upon the poet's head with both his hands, and rubbing his face violently against the buttons of his own dress, repeated again and again the words, *tarte à la crème—tarte à la crème*—being one of the phrases in "*L'Ecole des Femmes*" on which the critics had fastened as unpolite and barbarous. Greatly to the honour of Louis XIV., he censured with severity the courtier who, under the pretence of zeal for the elegance and purity of the French language, had taken the unmanly opportunity to insult a man of genius within the precincts of his master's palace.

*L'In-promptu de Versailles* was another fugitive piece, in which Molière, under the eyes of the sovereign, repelled the invidious criticism with which he had been assailed. Boursault, a man of talent and genius, had joined the cry against Molière, under the belief that he had himself been aimed at in the character of Lysidas, the poet, in the interlude. But Boursault prudently retired from the combat.

*La Princesse d'Elide*, executed upon a signal of the royal sceptre, was composed in haste to garnish a splendid fête of Louis, at Versailles, on the 9th of October, 1664, under the title of "*The Pleasures of the Enchanted Island*." As the scene belongs to the gorgeous and romantic drama, it afforded little scope to Molière's comic powers, though he has thrown in what the old English stage would have called the humours of Moron, a court jester. There may have been, however, allusions which are now lost, but which had poignancy at the time, since the entertainment was received with great applause. This production is, like the interlude of "*Les Fâcheux*," rather a series of detached scenes, connected by one single interest, which they neither advance nor retard, than a comedy bearing a regular plot.

His next production, of the same year, was a one act comedy, entitled *Le Mariage Forcé*. Sganarelle, a humourist of fifty-three or four, having a mind to marry a fashionable young woman, but feeling some instinctive doubts and scruples, consults several of his friends upon this momentous question; and the inimitable wit of Molière sustains so bald and simple a plot without permitting the reader to feel a sensation that the piece is wire-drawn or devoid of interest. The ridicule falls in a great measure on the sophists of the Sorbonne, whose attachment to the categories of Aristotle rendered them so obstinately opposed to every species of philosophical inquiry which transcended the limited sphere of the Stagyrite. The Aristotelian philosophers of the Sorbonne are treated with as little mercy as those of the ancient schools by the satirist Lucian, to whose works Molière seems to have been no stranger. Receiving no satisfactory counsel, and not much pleased with the proceedings of his bride elect, Sganarelle at last determines to give up his engagement, but is cudgelled into compliance by the brother of his

intended ; and so ends an entertainment which in the hands of any other would have been meagre enough, but as treated by Molière is full of humour and gaiety.

The concluding incident was taken from an adventure of the celebrated Comte de Grammont, renowned for his wit and gallantry, which made much noise at the time. While residing at the court of Charles II. Grammont had paid his assiduous addresses to the beautiful Miss Hamilton, sister of his future historian, Count Anthony Hamilton. But as fickle as brilliant, the Comte de Grammont, being permitted by Louis XIV. to return to Paris, set off for Dover without taking leave of his mistress. Two brethren of the deserted Ariadne pursued and overtook the fugitive Theseus. "Have you not forgotten something in London, Comte?" was the question of the Hamiltons. "In faith, I have," replied the Comte, (more prudent than Sganarelle, and not waiting till things came to extremities)—"to marry your sister." And he returned and redeemed his pledge accordingly, with a better grace at least than most other persons would have manifested in similar circumstances.

In the evening of the same day which saw "*Le Mariage Forcé*," came out, as a part of the royal fête, the three first acts or rough sketch of the celebrated satire, entitled *Tartuffe*, one of the most powerful of Molière's compositions. It was applauded, but from the clamour excited against the poet and the performance, as an attack on Religion, instead of its impious and insidious adversary Hypocrisy, the representation was for the time interdicted ; a fortunate circumstance, perhaps, since, in consequence, the drama underwent a sedulous revision, given by Molière to few of his performances.

*Le Festin de Pierre*—the Feast of the Statue—well known to the modern stage under the name of Don Juan, was the next vehicle of Molière's satire. The story, borrowed from the Spanish, is well known. In giving the sentiments of the libertine Spaniard, the author of *Tartuffe* could not suppress his resentment against the party by whose interest with the King that piece had been excluded from the stage, or at least its representation suspended. "The profession of a hypocrite," says Don Juan, "has marvellous advantages. The imposture is always respected, and although it may be detected, must never be condemned. Other human vices are exposed to censure, and may be attacked boldly. Hypocrisy alone enjoys a privilege which stops the mouth of the satirist, and enjoys the repose of sovereign impunity." This expression, with some other passages in the piece, (the general tenor of which is certainly not very edifying,) called down violent clamours upon the imprudent author ; some critics went so far as to invoke the spiritual censure and the doom of the civil magistrate on Molière, as the Atheist of his own "*Festin de Pierre*." He was, how-

ever, on this as on other occasions, supported by the decided favour of the King, who then allowed Molière's company to take the title of *Comédiens du Roi*, and bestowed on them a pension of seven thousand livres, thereby showing how little he was influenced by the clamours of the poet's enemies, though attacking his mind on a weak point.

In the month of September, 1665, the King having commanded such an entertainment to be prepared, the sketch or impromptu called *L'Amour Médecin*, was, in the course of five days, composed, got up, as the players call it, and represented. In this sketch, slight as it was, Molière contrived to declare war against a new and influential body of enemies. This was the medical faculty, which he had slightly attacked in the "Festin de Pierre." Every science has its weak points, and is rather benefited than injured by the satire which, putting pedantry and quackery out of fashion, opens the way to an enlightened pursuit of knowledge. The medical faculty at Paris, in the middle of the seventeenth century, was at a very low ebb. Almost every physician was attached to some particular form of treatment, which he exercised on his patients without distinction, and which probably killed in as many instances as it effected a cure. Their exterior, designed, doubtless, to inspire respect by its peculiar garb and formal manner, was in itself matter of ridicule. They ambled on mules through the city of Paris, attired in an antique and grotesque dress, the jest of its laughter-loving people, and the dread of those who were unfortunate enough to be their patients. The consultations of these sages were conducted in a barbarous Latinity, or if they condescended to use the popular language, they disfigured it with an unnecessary profusion of technical terms, or rendered it unintelligible by a prodigal tissue of scholastic formalities of expression. Mr Taschereau quotes the verses of a contemporary.

"Affecter un air pedantesque  
Cracher du Grec et du Latin,  
Longue perruque habit grotesque,  
De la fourrure et de satin  
Tout cela reuni fait presque  
Ce qu'on appelle un médecin."

The rules taught to the faculty were calculated to cherish every ancient error and exclude every modern improvement, for they were sworn never to seek out discoveries in the science which they practised, or to depart from the aphorisms of Hippocrates. Daring empirics were found amongst them, who adventured upon the administration of chemical receipts, of which they could not even conjecture the effect, and there were individuals believed capable, if gained by a sufficient bribe, of accelerating the death of the patients whom they came to cure. The medical science was, in short, enveloped in ignorance, and to encourage those who followed the profession in the attainment of real knowledge, it was necessary to expose the pedantry and insufficiency of these

formal and empty pretenders to a science of which they knew nothing. To rescue the noble power of healing, which has in our days been followed by so many men of minds as vigorous and powerful as their hearts were benevolent, from the hands of ignorance and empiricism, was a task worthy the satire of Molière, who, with Le Sage for his colleague, went far in accomplishing it

The venerable dulness and pedantic ignorance of the faculty was incensed at the ridicule cast upon it in *L'Amour Médecin*, especially, as four of its most distinguished members were introduced under Greek names, invented by Boileau for his friend's use. The consultation held by these sages, which respects everything save the case of the patient—the ceremonious difficulty with which they are at first brought to deliver their opinions—the vivacity and fury with which each finally defends his own, menacing the instant death of the patient, if any other treatment be observed, seemed all to the public highly comical, and led many reflecting men to think Lisette was not far wrong, in contending that a patient should not be said to die of a fever or a consumption, but of four doctors and two apothecaries. The farce enlarged the sphere of Molière's enemies, but as the poet suffered none of the faculty to prescribe for him, their resentment was of the less consequence.

The *Misanthrope*, accounted by the French critics the most correct of Molière's compositions, was the next vehicle of his satire against the follies of the age. Except for the usual fault of his gratuitously adopted coarseness, it is admirably imitated in the "Plain Dealer," of Wycherley. Alceste is an upright and manly character, but rude, and impatient even of the ordinary civilities of life and the harmless hypocrisies of complaisance, by which the ugliness of human nature is in some degree disguised. He quarrels with his friend Philinte for receiving the bow of a man he despises; and with his mistress for enjoying a little harmless ridicule of her friend, when her back is turned. He tells a conceited poet, that he prefers the sense and simplicity of an old ballad to the false wit of a modern sonnet,—he proves his judgment to be just,—and receives a challenge from the poet in reward of his criticism. Such a character, placed in opposition to the false and fantastic affectations of the day, afforded a wide scope for the satire of Molière. The situation somewhat resembles that of Eraste, in "Les Fâcheux." But the latter personage is only interrupted by fools and impostors during a walk in the Tuilleries, where he expected to meet his mistress. The distress of Alceste lies deeper,—he is thwarted by pretenders and coxcombs in the paths of life itself, and his peculiar temper renders him impatient of being pressed and shouldered by them; so that, like an irritable man in a crowd, he resents those inconveniencies to which men of equanimity submit, not as a matter of choice, indeed, but as a

point of necessity. The greater correctness of this piece may be owing to the lapse of nine months, (an unusual term of repose for the muse of Molière,) betwixt the appearance of "L'Amour Médecin" and that of the "Misanthrope." Yet this chef-d'œuvre was at first coldly received by the Parisian audience, and to render it more attractive, Molière was compelled to attach to its representation the lively farce of *Le Médecin malgré lui*. In a short time the merit of the "Misanthrope" became acknowledged by the public, and even many of those critics who had hitherto been hostile, united in its praise.

Yet scandal was not silent, for Molière was loudly censured, as having, in the person of Alceste, ridiculed the Duke de Montausier, a man of honour and virtue, but of blunt uncourteous manners. The duke, informed that he had been brought on the stage by Molière, threatened vengeance, but being persuaded to see the play, he sought out the author instantly, embraced him repeatedly, and assured him that if he had really thought of him when composing the "Misanthrope," he regarded it as an honour which he could never forget.

The lively farce of "*Le Médecin malgré lui*," was translated by Fielding, under the title of the "Mock Doctor." The story is taken from an old fabliau, which in its turn has probably been derived from an eastern tale. In the original tale, the Mock Doctor having been cudgelled into a leech of deep skill, is commanded by the king of the country, on pain of perishing under the bastinado, to cure at once all the sick of the capital, whom the well-meaning sovereign has assembled for the purpose, in an immense hospital. The "*médecin malgré lui*," extricates himself with dexterity. He assembles his patients in a great hall, in one end of which is lighted a mighty fire.

"My friends," says the physician, "I can, it is true, cure all your complaints, but the principal ingredient in my panacea, is the ashes of a man who has been burned alive! As this is indispensable to the composition of the medicine, I have no doubt that the patient amongst you who feels himself most deplorably indisposed, will willingly agree to be sacrificed as the victim, by means of whose death the rest are to be cured. You, sir," addressing a gouty patient, "have much the appearance of being the greatest invalid present." "Who, I, sir?" replied Gout, "appearances are deceitful, I was never better in my life than at this moment." "If well in health what business have you among the sick? Get out with you! You," to a paralytic patient, "have, I presume, no objection to become the scape-goat." "Every objection p-p-possible," stuttered Palsy, and was turned out to hobble after Gout. The doctor gets rid of all his patients in the same manner, without any loss of reputation, for as they leave the hospital they are interrogated severally by the King, to whom, under apprehension of being sent back to be calcined, they all report themselves perfectly cured."

We cannot help thinking, that if Molière had been acquainted with this singular conclusion of the story, he would have, under some form or other, introduced it into his whimsical and entertaining little drama. The author himself treated the piece as a trifle, for which he is affectionately reproved by the author of the following verses —

“ Molière, dit on, ne l'appelle  
Qu'une petite bagatelle  
Mais cette bagatelle est d'un esprit si fin,  
Que, s'il faut que je vous le die,  
L'estime qu'on en fait est une maladie,  
Qui fait que, dans Paris, tout court au *Médecin* ”

But not even the praises paid to the “*Misanthrope*,” though a piece of a mood much higher than *Le Médecin malgré lui*, satisfied Molière “*Vous verrez bien autre chose*,” said he to Boileau, when the latter congratulated him on the success of the chef-d'œuvre which we have just named. He anticipated the success of the most remarkable of his performances, the celebrated “*Tartuffe*,” in which he has unmasked and branded vice, as in his lighter pieces he has chastised folly. This piece had been acted before Louis, before his queen, and his mother, and at the palace of the great Prince of Condé, but the scruples infused into the king long induced him to hesitate ere he removed the interdict which prohibited its representation. Neither were these scruples yet removed. Permission was, indeed, given to represent the piece, but under the title of the “*Impostor*,” and calling the principal person, Panulphe, for it seems the name of Tartuffe, was peculiarly offensive. The King, having left Paris for the army, the president of the parliament of Paris prohibited any further representation of the obnoxious piece, thus disguised, although licensed by his Majesty. Louis did not resent this interference, and two compositions of Molière were interposed betwixt the date of the suspension which we have noticed, and the final permission to bring “*Tartuffe*” on the stage. These were—*Mélicerte*, a species of heroic pastoral, in which Molière certainly did not excel,—and *Le Sicilien, ou L'Amour Peintre*, a few lively scenes linked together, so as to form a pleasing introduction to several of those dances in costume, or ballets, as they were called, in which Louis himself often assumed a character.

At length, in August, 1667, *Le Tartuffe*, so long suppressed, appeared on the stage, and in the depth and power of its composition left all authors of comedy far behind. The art with which the “*Impostor*” is made to develop his real character, without any of the usual soliloquies or addresses to a confidant, for the benefit of the audience, has been always admired as inimitable. The heart of a man who had least desired, and could worst bear, close investigation, is discovered and ascertained in all its bearings, gradually, yet certainly, as navigators trace the lines and bearings of an unknown coast. The persons amongst

whom this illustrious hypocrite performs the principal character are traced with equal distinctness. The silly old mother, obstinate from age as well as bigotry, the modest and sensible Cléante, his brother-in-law, Orgon, prepared to be a dupe by prepossession and self-opinion, Damis, impetuous and unreflecting, Mariane, gentle and patient, with the hasty and petulant sallies of Dorine, who ridicules the family she serves with affection, are all faithfully drawn and contribute their own share on the effect of the piece, while they assist in bringing on the catastrophe. In this catastrophe, however, there is something rather artificial. It is brought about too much by a *tour de force*, too entirely by the "de par le roi," to deserve the praise bestowed on the rest of the piece. It resembles, in short, too nearly the receipt for making the "Beggars' Opera" end happily, by sending some one to call out a reprieve. But as it manifested at the same time the power of the prince, and afforded opportunity for panegyric on his acuteness in detecting and punishing fraud, Moliere, it is certain, might have his own good reasons for unwinding and disentangling the plot by means of an *exempt* or king's messenger.

Besides the honourable tribute paid to the sovereign in the close of the "Tartuffe," a diverting part of the colloquy in the first act was borrowed from an expression of Louis himself. It chanced that upon the eve of a fast, the King, being hungry, sat down to a repast, and invited Perefex, Bishop of Rhodéz, to bear him company. The prelate declined with affectation, and with an obstinacy of which the King desired to know the motive. After the bishop had left the apartment, some one gave Louis a particular account of his reverence's dinner, which consisted of so many dishes, and was so well done justice to, that his Majesty could have no apprehension of his suffering from famine. At the name of each new dish, the King exclaimed, in a varied inflection of voice, "*Oh, le pauvre homme !*" the very expression which Orgon uses to express his sympathy with Tartuffe. This anecdote associated the prince, in a certain degree, with the success of the play, and may have inclined him at last to the favourable estimate which he formed of "Tartuffe."

But our readers may request, after all, to know our sentiments on the objection of profanity, which, though unquestionably it was advanced against Molière by men actuated by personal and invidious motives, was also supported by the authority of Bossuet and Bourdaloue.

"As true and false doctrine," says the latter preacher, "have I know not how many actions in common betwixt them, and the exterior of the one can hardly be discriminated from the other, it is not only an easy but almost a necessary consequence, that the raillery which attacks one should affect the other, and that the features imputed to the one should disfigure the other. Such has been the actual consequence when pro-



fane wits have undertaken to censure hypocrisy, and thereby caused unjust suspicions to be entertained of real piety, by malignant interpretations put upon that which is false. This is what they have attempted in exposing to the laughter of a public theatre, an imaginary hypocrite, and turning, in his person, the most holy things into ridicule, representing him as blaming the scandals of the world in an extravagant manner, and as affecting a scrupulous conscience on indifferent matters, while he scrupled not, secretly, to meditate the most atrocious crimes, assuming a rueful penitentiary visage, which only served to cover the most sensual indulgences, and affixing to him, as their caprice suggests, an exterior of austere piety, as a cover of the basest and most mercenary purposes."

Such is the charge brought by a wise, eloquent, and pious man, in his sermon on the seventh Sunday after Easter. But wisdom, eloquence, and piety, are all liable to error, and differing essentially from Bourdaloue in the opinion which he has expressed, we have deemed it only justice to state the case in his own forcible words before we venture to express our humble sentiments.

We may remark, in the first place, that were the preacher's arguments to be carried to extremity, it would follow as a result, that no vice could be blamed, lest a censure should arise on its corresponding virtue. In that mode of reasoning, a satire upon avarice would be objectionable as a censure of economy, and the blame applicable to profusion would be proscribed as discrediting generosity. For every virtue, brilliant in itself, is followed by a vice, attached to it as a shadow is to substance, bearing in its milder aspect the appearance of the virtue carried to excess, and seeming as inseparable from it as Bourdaloue declares hypocrisy to be from true religion. But are we, therefore, to refrain from censuring the vicious excess, because we render due honour to the virtue practised in its just mean? We do not, however, insist on this general argument, because we willingly concede that it is less lawful and even more dangerous to treat lightly the language and observances of religion, than those which only regard moral conduct and social life.

We agree, therefore, with Father Bourdaloue, that the rash application of satire or ridicule, as the single test of truth, from which there lies no appeal, may lead to the worst consequences where religion is in question. To hold up to ridicule the scruples of a conscience really tender and fearful of offence, even if these scruples are stretched, in our estimation, to the verge of absurdity, is, we think, likely to be attended with all the scandal to true religion which the learned preacher apprehends. But, grant the existence of such criminals as *Tartuffe*, (and, alas! who dare deny that there have existed, and perhaps are yet to be found such snakes in the bosom of Christian society,) we search in vain

in Scripture, or in the practice of the best friends of religion in all ages, for any warrant to spare them. If we look to the Holy Scripture, our best and safest guide, no crime is denounced more frequently, or described as more odious to the Author of our Religion, than that of the hypocrites who made a game of godliness, and possessed themselves by means of long prayers of the goods of orphans. We find them repeatedly mentioned, and with a deepness of denunciation on their practices which seems to authorize their being held up to detestation by every means which can be taken to expose moral criminals. If the state of society be such, that characters of a cast so dangerous,

“ Safe from the bar, the pulpit, and the throne,  
Are touched and shamed by ridicule alone, ”

where shall we find the means of assailing them unless by the influence of satire ?

If ridicule as well as reason had not been employed, and that with an unsparing hand, the whole Christian world would at this day have groaned under the oppressions and usurpations of the Church of Rome, or if Louis XIV. had fully apprehended the satire of Molière, he might have saved that great blot on his name, the persecution of his Protestant subjects, and the breach of public faith, in revoking the Edict of Nantes. Ridicule is, we allow, a hazardous weapon, to be used with caution, yet when employed with a good faith and honest purpose, it is the most formidable and effectual which can be directed against a crime equally odious in the sight of God and dangerous to human society. It is, we think, in the allegorical romance of Spenser, that a champion is introduced bending with awe and reluctance his lance against an opponent covered by the red cross shield. But when that sign is found to disguise an impostor and a felon, the true knight does not permit him for an instant to enjoy its protection. There is much less danger of religion being discredited by the discovery and exposure of devoted and self-seeking hypocrisy, than in permitting that vice to lurk like a concealed and consuming canker in the bosom of society, undetected and uncauterized. To assert that the practice of exterior observances is to preserve the hypocrite from exposure, because it may occasion a scrupulous inquisition into the conduct of the really conscientious, is saying, that we ought to receive a false coinage because it is an imitation of that which is true, or that the profession of religion ought to serve, like the churches of Popish countries, as an asylum for all that is vicious and criminal in society.

If, indeed, hypocrisy is to be sacred from ridicule, it is not easy to see to what tribunal that odious vice is to be delivered for trial and censure. The scandal which Père Bourdaloue apprehends to real religion must be incurred by every species of inquisition that shall be

made into the reality of religious pretexts ; and yet without some such inquisition the tares cannot be severed from the wheat—the forged and worthless imitation distinguished from the precious and inimitable reality. The same evil would arise from punishing the crimes of Tartuffe in a court of justice as from exposing them upon the stage. But, surely, although such exposure may lead men to try more severely the pretensions of such as make peculiar professions of devotion, the separation of the pure gold from the dross must in the end lead to the first being held in higher estimation, and to the worthlessness of the second being exposed to deserved contempt.

We have hitherto considered the case of an incorrigible hypocrite, as of one who is punished not with a view to his correction, but to his detection and the prevention of the mischief he may work in society. But this is only half of the real question. Spiritual pride, a sin, and a great one, often creeps insensibly into bosoms which are most formed to nourish devotional sentiments. The self-supposed elect of the Deity is too apt (so easily are our best inclinations turned to corruption and perversion) to look down on the race of worldly men, and, in his delusion, to return thanks, with the Pharisee, that he is not like the contrite Publican. A portrait like that of Tartuffe may arrest such a man in his course by showing him that the fairest professions and the strictest observances may be consistent with the foulest purposes ; and that though we may strictly discharge our religious duties, we are not to arrogate to ourselves merits towards heaven, or entertain hopes which can only be grounded on merits far different from our own. Such a picture may also call to reflection the bold and ambitious impostor, who, from the desire of acquiring influence over his fellow-men, is tempted to use his religious character as the means of effecting his purpose. As the career of such a character often begins and proceeds to a certain length in the sincere feeling of devotion, it may be prevented from ending in a course of hypocrisy equally dangerous to the individual himself and to society, by the public exposure of the contents of one of those sepulchres, whitened on the outside, which are a charnel-house within.

We do not desire to travel out of the record, or to lay down any general rule in what cases satire ought, or ought not, to be employed in reprehension of hypocrisy. Undoubtedly there may be instances to which Bourdaloue's arguments are applicable, and where it may be better that a criminal person should be punished, or expelled from society, without public exposure. But the case of Tartuffe is that of a vilely wicked man, rendering the profession of religion hateful, by abusing it for the worst purposes ; and if such characters occurred, as there is little reason to doubt, in the time and court of Louis XIV., we can see no reason against their being gibbeted in effigy. The poet

himself is at pains to show that he draws the true line of distinction betwixt the hypocrite and the truly religious man. When the duped Orgon, astonished at the discovery of Tartuffe's villainy, expresses himself doubtful of the existence of real worth, Cléante replies to him with his usual sense and moderation

"Hé bien ! ne voilà pas de vos emportemens !  
 Vous ne gardez en rien les doux tempéramens  
 Dans la droite raison jamais n'entre la vôtre  
 Et toujours d'un excès vous vous jetez dans l'autre  
 Vous voyez votre erreur, et vous avez connu  
 Que par un zèle feint vous étiez prévenu  
 Mais pour vous corriger quelle raison demande  
 Que vous alliez passer d'une erreur plus grande  
 Et qu'avecque le cœur d'un perfide vaurien  
 Vous confondiez les cœurs de tous les gens du bien ?  
 Quoi ! parce qu'un fripon vous dupe avec audace  
 Sous le pompeux éclat d'un austère grimace,  
 Vous voulez que partout on soit fait comme lui,  
 Et qu'aucun vrai dévot ne se trouve aujourd'hui ?  
 Laissez aux libertins ces sottes conséquences  
 Démêlez la vertu d'avec ses apparences,  
 Ne hasardez jamais votre estime trop tôt,  
 Et soyez pour cela dans milieu qu'il faut  
 Gardez vous, s'il se peut, d'honorer l'imposture  
 Mais au vrai zèle aussi n'allez pas faire injure  
 Et s'il vous faut tomber dans une extrémité,  
 Péchez plutôt encor de cet autre côté"—Act V Scene 1

After the victorious reception of "Tartuffe," and before the clamour and controversy to which it gave occasion were nearly ended, Molière presented the stage with the wild and lively comedy of *Amphitryon*. We must own that a piece founded on such a subject does not appear to us to have been wisely calculated to efface the reproaches cast upon the author of "Tartuffe," as a corrupter of national morals, and that a satire on some decided vice, fashionable at the time, would have much better supported his defence against the devotees, whether true or false, than a drama, which, though drawing its origin from pagan times, must always remain censurable. But the subject had been admitted on every stage in Europe, although, according to Riccoboni it should not be received on any theatre, where morals are respected.

The truth may, perhaps, be, that Molière, weary for the moment of contention, was willing to compose a play, entertaining from its subject, and affording room for jests, which neither men of fashion, doctors, princesses, nor bigots, could regard as personal. He might remember what the great Condé said to Louis XIV., when the King asked him how the auditors, so sensitive about Tartuffe, listened, without indignation, to the profanities and indecencies of a coarse farce called *Scaramouche Hermite*. "Because," replied Condé, "it only violates decency and religion, without attacking priests and bigots." Be that as it may,

Amphitryon was handled with infinite humour, and with as much decency as the story permitted, and censure was drowned in laughter.

Molière was not so fortunate in his next piece, though equally well received, and no less deserving of it. *George Dandin*, a wealthy citizen, who has had the imprudence to marry a sprig of quality, daughter of an old jackass of nobility called Monsieur De Sotenville, and his no less noble spouse Madame de la Prudoterie, is exposed at once to the coquetry of a light-headed wife, who despises his birth and understanding, and to the rigorous sway of her parents; who, called upon to interfere with their authority, place their daughter in the right, and the unhappy roturier, their son-in-law, in the wrong, on every appeal which is made to them. Angelica is represented as thoughtless, not criminal, and appearances, at least, are thus saved. Nevertheless, there was more than one Sotenville about court, and Dandin in the city, who felt the ridicule sting home, and complained, as Rousseau did afterwards, that, in seeking food for his satiric vein, Molière was not unwilling to pervert the order of society, and to sow dissension in the bosom of families. The public again laughed at the sufferers, and exculpated the poet, or became, by their applause, his accomplices in the pretended crime.

*George Dandin* was acted 18th July, 1668. On the 3rd September, in the same year, the moral comedy of *L'Avare* was presented to the public by the fertile muse of our author. The general conception of the piece, as well as many of the individual scenes, are taken from Plautus, but adapted to French society, with a degree of felicity belonging to Molière alone. The poor (and most people think themselves so with relation to their expenses) are usually somewhat envious of the rich, and very willing to enjoy a laugh at their cost; especially if the latter stand convicted of avarice, or saving money, not for the sake of what it can procure, but for the purpose of amassing and hoarding it. No vice meets with less sympathy than avarice, for the good reason that all think that they could employ, to advantage, what the miser seems to possess only after the manner of *Æsop's* dog in the manger, withholding it from others, yet denying to himself the enjoyments which it might command. The vice also, when it gains possession of an individual, shows so mean, inconsequential, and unreasonable, that we cannot wonder at its being a favourite subject for satirical poetry. The highest compliment paid to the truth of Molière's picture was by an actual miser, who was so much delighted with the representation, that he did not grudge the money which his admission had cost, because the piece, as he argued, contained such excellent lessons of economy. It is remarkable that M. Taschereau, while he mentions this play as an immortal page in the history of French manners, seems to think that it records a character which has now ceased to exist in Paris. Elwes has

been long in his grave ; but we believe that Harpagons could yet be found on this side of the Channel. "L'Avare" was less favourably received than usual ; the reason assigned is its being written in prose ;—but posterity did Molière ample justice :—it was transferred to the British stage, of which it still retains possession, by the celebrated Fielding.

*Monsieur De Pourceaugnac*, acted in autumn, 1669, "is," says Voltaire, "a farce ; but in all Molière's farces are found scenes worthy of the highest class of comedy. It is mixed, undoubtedly, with much buffoonery of a coarse and low kind ; but this was necessary to attract large popular audiences. "I am the manager of a theatre as well as an author," said Molière, "I must make some money, as well as correct and instruct, and I am necessarily sometimes induced to consult the profit and interest of my company, at the expense of my own fame as an author." To a confession so frank and manly no critic can venture to reply ; the only wonder is, how little, comparatively speaking, there is of meanness or sacrifice to public taste, how much of real wit and comedy, in compositions which claim no higher name than farces.

The province of Limoges has been esteemed the Thebes of France, and its natives, as if born in a grosser air, are popularly supposed peculiarly dull, and liable to imposition. A Limosin gentleman named Monsieur De Pourceaugnac (almost all the names of that country terminate in *ac*) comes to Paris to marry Julie, the heroine ; the authority of her father having destined her hand to him. But Julie has a lover, and this lover has the art to play off so many tricks and mystifications upon the provincial suitor, that he finally relinquishes his suit in despair. The piece being a *comédie-ballet*, the comic scenes are intermingled with pageants resembling the ancient masque, which were ingeniously contrived so as to blend with the interest of the piece. What is delivered as real comic dialogue is so excellent, that Diderot has well said, the critic would be much mistaken who should think there were men more capable of writing "*Monsieur De Pourceaugnac*" than of composing the "*Misanthrope*." This piece was brought on the English stage under the title of the "*Brave Irishman*." The object of the tricks and jests of the scene is, in that little piece, an honest Hibernian, whom the author has gifted with a perfect ignorance of the town, and a competent quantity of confusion of ideas, but, at the same time, with so much of the native gallantry of his country, that, instead of encountering the fate of Monsieur De Pourceaugnac, he breaks through all the toils which have been spread for him, and carries off the lady in spite of his intriguing rival.

Omitting *Les Amans Magnifiques*, called by Molière a minor comedy, but which may be rather considered as a piece of framework for the introduction of scenic pageantry, and which is only distinguished by

some satirical shafts, directed against the now obsolete folly of judicial astrology we hasten to notice a masterpiece of Molière's art in *Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme*. This piece was written to please the court and gentry, at the expense of the *nouveaux riches*, who, rendered wealthy by the sudden acquisition of immense fortune, become desirous to emulate such as have been educated in the front ranks of society, in those accomplishments, whether mental or personal, which cannot be gracefully acquired after the early part of life is past. A grave, elderly gentleman learning to dance is proverbially ridiculous, but the same absurdity attaches to every one, who, suddenly elevated from his own sphere, becomes desirous of imitating, in the most minute particulars, those who are denizens of that to which he is raised. It is scarcely necessary to notice, that the ridicule directed against such characters as Monsieur Jourdain properly applies, not to their having made their fortunes, if by honest means, but to their being ambitious to distinguish themselves by qualities inconsistent with their age, habits of thinking, and previous manners. Jonson, before the time of Molière, had described, in the character of Sogliardo, a character something like Monsieur Jourdain, to whom the Herald's College had assigned for crest a headless boar. "And rampant too—troth I commend the herald's wit," observes one of the personages. "He has decyphered him with a swine without a head, without brain, wit, or anything, indeed, ramping to gentility." But the comic power of Molière has dwelt upon and illustrated the character, which Jonson only indicated by a few rough outlines; and there are few scenes, even in this admirable author's performances, more laughable than those of Jourdain's scenes with his various teachers, illustrated by the raillery of Nicole, who sees and exposes so naturally the folly of her master.

The subjects of raillery most generally piquant to the high-born and courtly, are those directed against such intruders as Monsieur Jourdain, whom wealth emboldens to thrust upon them an awkward pretension to equality. Yet the court of France did not receive *Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme* in a favourable manner, when first presented at Chambord on 14th October, 1670. Louis XIV, contrary to his wont, sate silent during the entertainment, and did not, as had been his custom hitherto, address a single word of encouragement to the author. *Regis ad exemplar*, the lords of the court looked cold on Molière, and the tongues of all his enemies were unchained. Some called shame upon him, for having represented Dorante, a man of quality, united in a scheme for duping Monsieur Jourdain, and partaking his spoils. Others, with more judgment, exclaimed against the extravagant interlude, in which the *bourgeois gentilhomme* is persuaded that the Grand Seigneur has made him a Mamamouchi, a knight of an imaginary order, and goes through the ceremony of a mock installation. Those very critics

who asked how Molière had hoped to pass such gibberish upon them as was sung on this occasion, had listened with tranquillity, nay, with affected delight, to entertainments of the same kind, in which Louis himself had appeared as a performer. The friends of Molière made no very judicious defence. They endeavoured to represent the plot of the interlude as probable, and quoted the instance of the Abbé St. Martin, who had been duped into a belief that he had received honours from the King of Siam. But Molière's apology rested on the very nature of the comedie-ballet, which admits of every species of incident, provided it produces good music and merry dances.

Several days elapsed between the first and second representation ; during which Molière sustained all the anxiety of a discountenanced author. But after the piece had been acted for the second time, Louis at once did justice to the poet, and to his own judgment. The piece, he said, was excellent, and he had only suspended his opinion till he should be assured that he was speaking on mature reflection, and not under the seductive impression of excellent acting.

Of course the tone of the courtiers changed ; the chorus of " Ha la ba, Ba la chou," became wit and sense, and Dorante was only a man of quality who inflicted condign punishment on an insolent roturier, and abated his fever of conceit by assisting to drain his pocket. A certain duke, in particular, who had been loud in declaring against the dancing Turks and their unintelligible mummeries, now exclaimed in well-painted rapture, " Molière is inimitable. He has reached a point of perfection to which none of the ancients ever attained."

*Les Fourberies de Scapin*, an imitation of the Phormio of Terence, was Molière's next performance. It was written not for the amusement of the court, but for the diversion of the city of Paris, and possesses no other interest than what can be produced by whimsical interest, the tricks of an ingenious valet,

" From top to toe the Geta now in vogue,"

upon an ill-tempered and avaricious father, in behalf of a giddy and extravagant son. There is no severe strain of morality in such a plot, but it is absurd to suppose that either parents will become dishonest, or sons disobedient, because they see Scapin and Leandre cheat old Argante. It would be as reasonable to suppose that a peasant would go home and beat his wife, because Punch in the puppet-show cudgels Joan. This comedy is one of adventure and intrigue, with little pretension to delineation of character. But Molière's exquisite skill in dialogue could not be suppressed or concealed. We doubt if, with his utmost efforts, he could have been absolutely dull, without the assistance of a pastoral subject and heroic measure. The phrase *Que diable alla-t-il faire dans cette galère ?* will live as long as the French language.



*Psyche* may be omitted as a subject totally unfitted for Molière's genius ; we are even tempted to say it could not be the work of the author of the " *Misanthrope*," with its brilliant associates in fame—*Non omnia*—the highest genius has its natural bounds. *La Comtesse d'Escarbagnas*, which next appears, turns entirely upon the oddities, absurdities, and affectations of the provincial noblesse, who had at that time manners and habits of thinking extremely ridiculous in the eyes of the more polished society of the court. Molière must have been completely acquainted with these ludicrous points in the character of this class of society, as he had resided in so many different parts of France at the head of his wandering troop. Accordingly he has presented us with the rural Dowager, who is deeply incensed that a man of quality at court, whose family is not, perhaps, above two hundred years old, should dare to compare his gentility with that of her deceased husband, who had lived all his life in the country, kept a pack of hounds, and signed himself *Count*, in every bill, bond, or acquittance. The clownishness of the poor lady's servants is humorously contrasted with her vain attempts to make them keep up the appearances she thinks suitable to her rank. It is, perhaps, the piece of Molière's in which foreigners feel the comic point least forcibly, but it was followed by one, the interest of which is vivid and unimpaired by the course of time.

This is *Les Femmes Savantes*, acted on 11th March, 1672, it was directed against a new female foible which had sprung up in the world of fashion, after the explosion of that of the Hotel de Rambouillet. Always ambitious of exclusive distinction, as they dared no longer render themselves conspicuous by the jargon of romance, they adopted the honours of science, and aspired to the dignity of learned ladies. Molière, "the Contemplator" as his friends called him, did not suffer this new species of pedantry to elude his vigilance. In fact it was of the same *genus*, though of a different species from that which he had formerly assailed successfully, for modish affectation possesses as many heads as the fabled hydra, of which

"One still bourgeons where another falls."

and the satirist, on his part, deserved the praise due to a moral Hercules.

Out of a fashion or humour, which to an ordinary man would have but afforded a few scenes, Molière has found sufficient interest to fill up five acts of one of his best regular comedies. The Abbé Cotin—a personage who, affecting to unite in himself the rather inconsistent characters of a writer of poems of gallantry and a powerful and excellent preacher, had obtained in the satires of Boileau a painful immortality—was also distinguished in "*Les Femmes Savantes*" as one of the leading beaux-esprit of the day, a poet *à la mode*, who, with equal truth

and modesty, had the assurance to claim for himself the title of the Father of French Epigram. His dramatic name was originally Tricotin, which, as too plainly pointing out the individual, was softened into Trissotin. The following are the colours with which Molière has painted the unfortunate academician, for such Cotin had the honour to be.

" Monsieur Trissotin

M'inspire au fond de l'âme un dominant chagrin.  
 Je ne puis consentir, pour gagner ses suffrages,  
 A me déshonorer en prisant ses ouvrages ;  
 C'est par eux qu'à mes yeux il a d'abord paru,  
 Et je connoissois avant que l'avoir vu.  
 Je vis, dans le fatras des écrits qu'il nous donne,  
 Ce qu'étaie en tous lieux sa pédante personne,  
 La constante hauteur de sa présomption,  
 Cette intrépidité de bonne opinion  
 Cet indolent état de confiance extrême,  
 Qui le rend en tout temps si content de soi-même,  
 Qui fait qu'à son mérite incessamment il rit,  
 Qu'il se sait si bon gré de tout ce qu'il écrit,  
 Et qu'il ne voudroit pas changer sa renommée  
 Contre tous les honneurs d'un général d'armée."

The coxcombry of Trissotin is most pleasantly contrasted with the severe, grave, and more formal folly and presumption of Vadius, a pedant of heavier pretensions, founded upon his scholarship. The effect produced by the introduction of this brace of pretenders to the heroines, upon whom their supposed merits produce the same effect as the fashionable brilliancy of Mascarille and Jodelet in "*Les Précieuses Ridicules*," is extremely comical ; nor is the behaviour of the two originals to each other less so, since, after dispensing the necessary degree of mutual flattery, a mistake of the pedant in criticising a madrigal of which Trissotin was the author, sets them together by the ears, and produces a scene of quarrelling as ridiculous as that of mutual flattery which preceded it.

The character of the learned ladies, who exclaim in rapture at sight of a man who understands Greek, dismiss their female domestic because she does not understand the delicacies of French grammar, and well-nigh cashier a lackey, not for dropping a chair, but because he does not know the consequence of any derangement from the centre of gravity, is well contrasted with the foible of the Father of the Family, a man not devoid of good sense, and extremely fond of vindicating his title to be obeyed, so long as his wife is absent, but submitting on all occasions when he is called upon to maintain his rights by courageous perseverance against the will of his helpmate. This play has been always considered one of Molière's most powerful, as it is one of his most regular comedies.

The last of this great author's labours was at once directed against the faculty of medicine, and aimed at its most vulnerable point—namely, the

influence used by some unworthy members of the profession to avail themselves of the nervous fears and unfounded apprehensions of hypochondriac patients. Instead of treating imaginary maladies as a mental disease, requiring moral medicine, there have been found in all times medical men, capable of listening to the rehearsal of these brain-sick whims as if they were real complaints, prescribing for them as such, and receiving the wages of imposition, instead of the honourable reward of science. On the other hand, it must be admitted that the faculty has always possessed members of a spirit to condemn and regret such despicable practices. There cannot be juster objects of satire than such empirics, nor is there a foible more deserving of ridicule than the selfish timidity of the hypochondriac, who, ungrateful for the store of good health with which nature has endowed him, assumes the habitual precautions of an infirm patient.

Molière has added much to the humour of the piece by assigning to the *Malade Imaginaire* a strain of frugality along with his love of medicine, which leads him to take every mode that may diminish the expense of his supposed indisposition. The expenses of a sick bed are often talked of, but it is only the imaginary valetudinarian who thinks of carrying economy into that department; the real patient has other things to think of. Argan therefore is discovered taxing his apothecary's bill, at once delighting his ear with the flowery language of the Pharmacopœia, and gratifying his frugal disposition by clipping off some items and reducing others, and arriving at the double conclusion, first, that if his apothecary does not become more reasonable, he cannot afford to be a sick man any longer; and secondly, that as he has swallowed fewer drugs by one-third this month than he had done the last, it was no wonder that he was not so well. The inference "*Je le dirai à Monsieur Purgon, afin qu'il mette ordre à cela,*" is irresistibly comic.

It is scarcely an overstrained circumstance that an original, at once so fond of medicine and so chary of his money, should think of marrying his daughter to a young cub of a medical student, who is to be dubbed doctor in a few days. He is directed to this choice, both by the honour in which he holds the faculty, and the desire to possess the necessary medical advice within his own family which he is obliged to purchase at so dear a rate. A second wife, the stepmother of the destined bride, soothes her husband in this as well as his other humours. The match is opposed, and finally with success, by the inclinations of Angélique, the daughter, and the intrigues of her lover, Cléante, seconded by Toinette, a *fille de chambre* of the same brisk lively humour which the author loved to draw. Thomas Diafoirus, the young candidate for the privilege of killing or curing, is an admirable portrait of its particular class. Pedantry is never more ridiculous

than when associated with youth, upon which it sits so awkwardly.

There is a stage anecdote about the representation of the characters, worth the remark of more than one manager. An actress of his troop, of considerable pretensions, had married an inferior comedian named Beauveau, who had been at one time a candle-snuffer in the theatre. The parts of Toinette and Thomas Diafoirus were entrusted to this couple. Molière made so many critical objections to the lady's performance that she lost all patience. "You say all this to me," said she, "and not a word to my husband." "Heaven forbid I should attempt to instruct him," said Molière, "nature has given Monsieur Beauveau an instinctive comprehension of the part, which I should spoil in attempting to mend it."

Argan is at last persuaded, that the surest and cheapest way of securing himself against the variety of maladies by which he is beset, will be to become a doctor in his own proper person. He modestly represents his want of preliminary study, and of the necessary knowledge even of the Latin language; but he is assured that by merely putting on the robe and cap of a physician, he will find himself endowed with all the knowledge necessary for exercising the profession. "What," says the patient, "will merely putting on the habit enable me to speak scholarly upon diseases?" "Assuredly," reply his advisers, "under such a garb gibberish becomes learning, and folly wisdom." This leads to the interlude which concludes the piece, being the mock ceremonial of receiving a physician into the Esculapian college, couched in macaronic Latinity, which was afterwards introduced by Foote in the farce where Dr. Last makes a figure so distinguished. Another of these interludes we may barely mention as containing one of those flashes of humour of which Molière was so lavish, that they are to be found in his most trifling productions. Such certainly is a dance in which Polichinelle (Punch namely,) is pursued in the dark by the officers of justice (archers), and puts them to flight by making a sound resembling the report of a pistol. But though this is even childishly farcical, what can be more truly comic than the exclamation of the *archers* when they rally on the unfortunate jester:—

"Faquin, maraud, pendard, impudent, téméraire,  
Insolent, effronté, coquin, filou, voleur,  
*Vous osez nous faire peur!*"

As the "Malade Imaginaire" was the last character in which Molière appeared, it is here necessary to say a few words upon his capacity as an actor. He bore, according to one contemporary, and with justice, the first rank among the performers of his line. He was a comedian from top to toe. He seemed to possess more voices than one, besides which every limb had its expression;—a step in advance or retreat, a wink, a smile, a nod, expressed more in his action, than the greatest

talker could explain in words in the course of an hour. He was, says another contemporary, neither corpulent nor otherwise, rather above the middle size, with a noble carriage and well-formed limbs ; he walked with dignity, had a very serious aspect, the nose and mouth rather large, with full lips, a dark complexion, the eyebrows black and strongly marked, and a command of countenance which rendered his physiognomy formed to express comedy. A less friendly pen (that of the author of *L'In-promptu de l'Hotel de Condé*) has caricatured Molière as coming on the stage with his head thrown habitually back, his nose turned up into the air, his hands on his sides with an affectation of negligence, and (what would seem in England a gross affectation, but which was tolerated in Paris as an expression of the *superbia quasita meritis*,) his peruke always environed by a crown of laurels. But the only real defect in his performance arose from a habitual *hoquet*, or slight hiccup, which he had acquired by attempting to render himself master of an extreme volubility of enunciation, but which his exquisite art contrived on almost all occasions successfully to disguise.

Thus externally fitted for his art, there can be no doubt that he, who possessed so much comedy in his conceptions of character, must have had equal judgment and taste in the theatrical expression, and that only the poet himself could fully convey what he alone could have composed. He performed the principal character in almost all his own pieces, and adhered to the stage even when many motives concurred to authorize his retirement.

We do not reckon it any great temptation to Molière, that the Academy should have opened its arms to receive him, under condition that he would abandon the profession of an actor ; but the reason which he assigned for declining to purchase the honour at the rate proposed, is worthy of being mentioned. "What can induce you to hesitate?" said Boileau, charged by the Academicians with the negotiation. "A point of honour," replied Molière. "Now," answered his friend, "what honour can lie in blacking your face with mustachioes, and assuming the burlesque disguise of a buffoon, in order to be cud-gelled on a public stage?" "The point of honour," answered Molière, "consists in my not deserting more than a hundred persons, whom my personal exertions are necessary to support." The Academy afterwards did honour to themselves and justice to Molière by placing his bust in their hall, with this tasteful and repentant inscription—

"Nothing is wanting to the glory of Molière. Molière was wanting to ours !"

That Molière alleged no false excuse for continuing on the stage, was evident, when, in the latter years of his life, his decaying health prompted him strongly to resign. He had been at all times of a delicate constitution, and liable to pulmonary affections, which were rather

palliated than cured by submission, during long intervals, to a milk diet, and by frequenting the country, for which purpose he had a villa at Auteuil, near Paris. The malady grew more alarming from time to time, and the exertions of voice and person required by his profession tended to increase its severity. On the 17th of February, 1673, he became worse than usual; Baron, an actor of the highest rank and of his own training, joined with the rest of the company in remonstrating against their patron going on in the character of Argan. Molière answered them in the same spirit which dictated his reply to Boileau: "There are fifty people," he said, "who must want their daily bread, if the spectacle is put off. I should reproach myself with their distress, if I suffered them to sustain such a loss, having the power to prevent it."

He acted accordingly that evening, but suffered most cruelly in the task of disguising his sense of internal pain. A singular contrast it was betwixt the state of the actor and the fictitious character which he represented; Molière was disguising his real and, as it proved, his dying agonies, in order to give utterance and interest to the feigned or fancied complaints of *Le Malade Imaginaire*, and repressing the voice of mortal sufferance to affect that of an imaginary hypochondriac. At length on arriving at the concluding interlude, in which, assenting to the oath administered to him as the candidate for medical honours, in the mock ceremonial, by which he engages to administer the remedies prescribed by the ancients whether right or wrong, and never to use any other than those approved by the college—

"Maladus dûit-il crevare,  
Et mori de suo malo,"

as Molière, in the character of Argan, replied *Juro*, the faculty had a full and fatal revenge. The wheel was broken at the cistern—he had fallen into a convulsive fit. The entertainment was hurried to a conclusion, and Molière was carried home. His cough returned with violence, and he was found to have burst a blood-vessel. A priest was sent for, and two scrupulous ecclesiastics of Saint Eustace's parish distinguished themselves by refusing to administer the last consolations to a player and the author of *Tartuffe*. A third of better principles came too late, Molière was insensible, and choked by the quantity of blood which he could not discharge. Two poor Sisters of Charity who had often experienced his bounty, supported him as he expired.

Bigotry persecuted to the grave the lifeless reliques of the man of genius. Harlai, Archbishop of Paris, who himself died of the consequences of a course of continued debauchery, thought it necessary to show himself as intolerantly strict in form as he was licentious in practice. He forbade the burial of a comedian's remains. Madame Molière went to throw herself at the feet of Louis XIV., but with impolitic

temerity her petition stated, that if her deceased husband had been criminal in composing and acting dramatic pieces, his Majesty, at whose command and for whose amusement he had done so, must be criminal also. This argument, though in itself unanswerable, was too bluntly stated to be favourably received; Louis dismissed the suppliant with the indifferent answer, that the matter depended on the Archbishop of Paris. The King, however, sent private orders to Harlai to revoke the interdict against the decent burial of the man, whose talents, during his lifetime, his Majesty had delighted to honour. The funeral took place accordingly, but, like that of Ophelia, "with maimed rites." The curate of Saint Eustace had directions not to give his attendance, and the corpse was transported from his place of residence, and taken to the burial-ground, without being, as usual, presented at the parish church. This was not all. A large assemblage of the lower classes seemed to threaten an interruption of the funeral ceremony. But their fanaticism was not proof against a thousand francs which the widow of Molière dispersed among them from the windows, thus purchasing for the remains of her husband an uninterrupted passage to their last abode.

In these latter proceedings all readers will recognize the bigotry of the time. If in the peculiar circumstances in which Molière died, while personating a ridiculous character, and affecting an imaginary disease, there are precisians, even in the present day, who may be disposed to regard this catastrophe as a special manifestation of the divine displeasure, we would remind them, first, of the passage in the Gospel of St Mark, chapter xiii. verse 2, &c., strongly discountenancing such deductions. Secondly, we would observe, that the benevolent motive expressed by Molière for acting upon that occasion could not be other than sincere, since bodily malady of the severe nature under which he laboured must have silenced personal vanity, or any less powerful reason than the one alleged. Lastly, we may add, that if it be in any circumstances lawful to correct vice and folly by ridicule, and by an appeal to the feelings of the ludicrous which make part of our nature, the exposure of the selfish folly of the *Malade Imaginaire*, and of the ignorance as well as covetousness of those who assume the robe of knowledge without either knowledge or probity, must be a lawful and a useful employment.

We have now finished with Molière's public life, which was, in many respects, one of the most triumphant, and even apparently the most happy, that a man of genius could well propose to himself. From the time he returned to Paris in 1658, till 1673 when he died, fifteen years of continued triumph had attended his literary career; and, wonderful to tell, notwithstanding the proverbial fickleness of courts and of popular audiences, Molière never for a moment appears to have lost ground in their high opinion. His most insipid pieces, such as *Mélicerte* and

the like, incurred no disapprobation, they served their purpose, and were so far applauded; while those in which his own vein of wit and humour was displayed, were, in every instance, welcomed with shouts of applause at their first representation, or with universal approbation after a short interval of doubt, which must have rendered it still more flattering; like favours won from a mistress who would have refused them if she could. These were years, indeed, not of peace,—for Molière was surrounded by enemies,—but years of victorious war with enemies whom he despised, defied, and conquered. Nor were they years of ease and indolence, but a far more happy period of successful exertion. His reputation was unbounded, and his praise the theme of every tongue, from that of the Grand Monarque himself, to the meanest of his subjects.

Other men of genius have been victims to poverty and difficulties. But of these Molière knew nothing. His income, arising from his profits as manager, actor, and author, was extremely considerable, and, together with his pension, amounted to a sum amply sufficient for every purpose, whether of necessity or elegance. He was, in fact, an opulent man. This good fortune was well bestowed, for he was indefatigable in acts of charity. He sought out objects for his liberality amongst sufferers of a more modest description, and was lavish of his alms, less justifiably perhaps, to the poor whom he met in the streets. It is well remembered how, on one of these occasions, having given a piece of money to a beggar as he ascended his carriage, he was surprised to see the man come hallooing and panting after him, to tell him he had made a mistake, in giving him a piece of gold in place of some less valuable coin. "Keep the money, my friend, and accept this other piece," said Molière, "*Où la vertu va-t-elle se nicher?*" The action, as M. Taschereau says truly, shows Molière's benevolence, and the exclamation, in finding an expression so happy for such just wonder, marks his genius.

The private circle of Molière embraced the most distinguished men of the age. La Fontaine, Boileau, the joyous Chapelle, Racine, and other names of distinction in that Augustan age of French literature, formed the society in which he commonly enjoyed his hours of leisure, and in which literature, taste, and conviviality were happily blended. Many of the nobility had taste enough to waive the difference of rank and to choose Molière for a companion. "Come to me at any hour you please," said the great Prince de Conde to our author, "you have but to announce your name by a valet-de-chambre, your visit can never be ill-timed."

When aristocratic pride, or more frequently private malice and wounded self-conceit, assuming the pretext of difference of rank, endeavoured to put an affront upon Molière, he usually received instant



indemnification from some noblemen of better taste. Thus when the other valets-de-chambre of the royal household showed an unwillingness to assist Molière in the discharge of his office, Monsieur de Bellocq, a man of genius as well as rank, rebuked them by saying aloud to the object of their paltry spite—"Permit *me* to assist you in making the King's bed, Monsieur de Molière—I shall esteem myself honoured in having you for a companion."

Louis XIV., as we have already observed, was the constant and firm supporter of Molière. When assailed by a horrible calumny, which we will presently notice, the King showed his total disbelief by becoming god-father to one of his children. In fact, to his own great honour, he spared no opportunity of showing favour to a man whose genius he was fortunately able to appreciate. The following is a remarkable instance, occurring in the Memoirs of Madame Campan.

All the world has heard of the hearty appetite of the Grand Monarque. The liberal means which he took to appease his hunger at meal times not appearing uniformly sufficient to parry its attacks, the King introduced a general custom, that there should be a cold fowl, or some such trifle, kept in constant readiness *en cas de nuit*—in case that his Majesty should awake hungry. The King had been informed that the officers of his household had refused to admit Molière to the table provided for them, under pretence of the inequality of his condition. He took an opportunity to correct this folly. "Molière," said he, "I am told you make bad cheer here, and I myself feel something of an appetite. Let them serve up my *en cas de nuit*." He then caused Molière to sit down, cut up the fowl, and helping his valet-de-chambre, proceeded to breakfast along with him. It was at the King's levee, so that the noblest about the court saw the society in which it pleased his Majesty to eat his meals; and it may be well believed there was no objection in future to the introduction of Molière to the table of service, as it was termed.

Yet Molière had his cares and vexations; and the doom of man, born to trouble as the sparks fly upwards, was not reversed for this distinguished author. The plague and vexation arising from quarrels amongst his players, led him to exclaim, in "L'Inpromptu de Versailles,"—"What a troublesome task to manage a company of players." To a young man, also, who wished to embrace the profession of an actor, and really had some talents for it, he painted his own art in the most degrading colours; described its followers as compelled to procure the countenance of the great and powerful by the most disagreeable condescensions, and conjured him to follow out the law, for which his father had destined him, and to renounce all thoughts of the stage. There is room to believe that Molière's temper was so impatient, quick, and irritable, as to make him unusually sensible of the plagues and

disappointments incidental to the situation of a manager. He was sensitively alive to the mispronunciation of his own verses ; and the anecdote which M. Taschereau gives us as to his extreme agony on this subject, induces us to give credit to what is told of his impatience at any occasional want of punctuality, or accidental derangement of the business of the scene.

But Molière's greatest source of unhappiness arose from his marriage ; and upon this subject, the license of his younger years became the means of subjecting him to the most cruel calumnies in his more advanced life.

During the time that Molière was travelling about in the provinces, he formed a connection with an actress of his company, named Madelaine Bejart. This lady had been previously a favourite of the Count de Modene, by whom, in 1638, she had borne a daughter, named Françoise, who is supposed to have died soon afterwards. After the amour of Madelaine Bejart and Molière had terminated, our author, in 1661, married another Bejart, whose Christian name was Armande, and who, according to M. Taschereau, was the sister of his mistress Madelaine. In this connection there is something disgusting, and which the laws of some countries even regard as criminal. But a much more foul accusation was framed upon it. One Montfleuri, the favourite performer of a troop of comedians, called of "*l'Hotel du Bourgogne*," who were the rivals of that of Molière, extracted out of the above circumstance a most horrible and unnatural accusation, which he had the audacity to put into the form of a petition to his Majesty. According to this atrocious libel, Armande Bejart was not the sister of Molière's former mistress Madelaine, but her daughter, and the fruits of her communication with Molière himself ; thus confusing her with Françoise, daughter of the Count de Modene, the fact of whose birth seemed to give some credit to the horrible assertion.

Such is the account, given by M. Taschereau, of the real family of Molière's wife. According to another hypothesis, detailed in three letters published as a supplement to the last edition of Molière's works, Armande Bejart was not the sister, but actually the daughter of Madelaine Bejart and of the Count de Modene. Under this supposition, Molière married the child of his former mistress. The subject is disgusting, and the evidence on either side very imperfect. Undoubtedly it underwent some examination at the time ; for the King refused all credit to the odious imputation of Montfleuri, and, as we elsewhere hinted, showed his total incredulity on the subject, by condescending, along with the Duchess of Orleans, to stand godfather to Molière's first child—the best refutation, certainly, which could be given to the calumny.

But this marriage was in every respect imprudent and inauspicious,

and laid the foundation of his principal misfortunes. His wife was gay, beautiful, and coquettish in the extreme, yet he was not able to forbear loving her with an attachment which was neither deserved nor returned. She disgraced him repeatedly by her intrigues during his lifetime, and her scandalous adventures after his death were dishonourable to his memory. The honest men whom his satire had ridiculed on account of domestic distresses of the same nature, had no doubt some feeling of internal satisfaction, when they found that the author of the "*Cocu Imaginaire*" shared the same apprehensions with his hero, without having the slightest reason to doubt, in his own instance, of their being founded in reality.

Leaving the consideration of his private life, chequered as it was by favourable and painful circumstances, we willingly take some general view of the character of Molière as an author, in which we feel it our duty to vindicate for him the very highest place of any who has ever distinguished himself in his department of literature. His natural disposition, his personal habits, his vivacity as a Frenchman, the depth of his knowledge of human nature, his command of a language eminent above all others for the power of expressing ludicrous images and ideas, raise him to the highest point of eminence amongst the authors of his own country and class, and assure him an easy superiority over those of every other country.

Our countrymen will perhaps ask, if we have forgotten the inimitable comic powers of our own Shakespeare. The sense of humour displayed by that extraordinary man is perhaps as remarkable as his powers of searching the human bosom for other and deeper purposes. But if Johnson has rightly defined comedy to be "a dramatic representation of the lighter faults of mankind, with a view to make folly and vice ridiculous," it would be difficult to show that Shakespeare has dedicated to such purposes more than occasional and scattered scenes, dispersed through his numerous dramas. The "*Merry Wives of Windsor*" is perhaps the piece most resembling a regular comedy, yet the poetry with which it abounds is of a tone, which soars, in many respects, beyond its sphere. In most of his other compositions, his comic humour is rather an ingredient of the drama, than the point to which it is emphatically and specially directed. The scenes of Falstaff are but introduced to relieve and garnish the historical chronicle which he desired to bring on the stage. In the characters of Falconbridge and Hotspur, their peculiar humour gilds the stern features of high and lofty chivalry: in the "*Tempest*," the comic touches shine upon and soften the extravagance of beautiful poetry, and romantic fiction. These plays may be something higher and better, but they are not comedies dedicated to expose the vices and follies of mankind, though containing in them much that tends to that purpose. It must also be remembered, that the manners

in Shakespeare (so far as his comedy depends on them) are so antiquated, that but for the deep and universal admiration with which England regards her immortal bard, and the pious care with which his works have been explained and commented upon, the follies arising out of the fashions of his time would be entirely obsolete. We enjoy such characters as Don Armado, and even Malvolio, as we would do the pictures of Vandyke in a gallery; not that they resemble in their exterior anything we have ever seen or could have imagined, until the excellence of the painter presented them before us, and made us own that they must have been drawn from originals, now forgotten.

The scenes of Molière, however, are painted from subjects with which our own times are acquainted; they represent follies of a former date indeed, but which have their resemblances in the present day. Some old-fashioned habits being allowed for, the personages of his drama resemble the present generation as much as our grandmothers' portraits, but for hoop petticoats and commodes, resemble their descendants of the present generation. Our physicians no longer wear robes of office, or ride upon mules, but we cannot flatter ourselves that the march of intellect, as the cant phrase goes, has exploded either the "*Malade Imaginaire*," or the race of grave deceivers who fattened on his folly. If, again, we look at Molière's object in all the numerous pieces which his fertile genius produced, we perceive a constant, sustained, and determined warfare against vice and folly,—sustained by means of wit and satire, without any assistance derived either from sublimity or pathos. It signified little to Molière what was the mere form which his drama assumed: whether regular comedy or *comédie-ballet*, whether his art worked in its regular sphere, or was pressed by fashion into the service of mummery and pantomime, its excellence was the same,—if but one phrase was uttered, that phrase was comic. Instead of sinking down to the farcical subjects which he adopted, whether by command of the king, or to sacrifice to the popular taste, Molière elevated these subjects by his treatment of them. His pen, like the hand of Midas, turned all it touched to gold; or rather, his mode of treating the most ordinary subject gave it a value such as the sculptor or engraver can confer upon clay, rock, old copper, or even cherry-stones.

It is not a little praise to this great author, that he derived none of his powers of amusement from the coarse and mean sources to which the British dramatic poets had such liberal recourse. This might, and probably did, flow in part from the good taste of the poet himself, but it was also much owing to that of Louis XIV. Whatever the private conduct of that prince, of which enough may be learned from the scandalous chronicle of the times, he knew too well *son métier de Roi*, and what was due to his dignity in public, to make common jest with his

subjects at anything offensive to good morals or decorum. Charles II., on the other hand,—

“A merry monarch, scandalous and poor,”—

had been too long emancipated by his exile from all regal ceremonial, to lay his sense of humour under any restraints of delicacy. He enjoyed a broad jest, as he would have done an extra bottle of wine, without being careful about the persons who participated with him in either ; and hence a personal laxity of conduct which scandalized the feelings of Evelyn, and a neglect of decency in public entertainments encouraged by the presence of a sovereign, which called down the indignation of Collier. Some comparatively trifling slips, with which the critics of the period charge Molière, form no exception to the general decorum of his writings.

Looking at their general purpose and tendency, we must be convinced that there is no comic author, of ancient or modern times, who directed his satire against such a variety of vices and follies, which, if he could not altogether extirpate, he failed not at all events to drive out of the shape and form which they had assumed.

The absurdities of *L'Etourdi*, the ridiculous jargon of the *Précieuses*, the silly quarrels of the lovers in the *Dépit Amoureux*, the absurd jealousy of husbands in *L'Ecole des Maris*, the varied fopperies and affectations of men of fashion in *Les Fâcheux*, the picture of hypocrisy in the *Tartuffe*, the exhibition at once of bizarre and untractable virtue and of the depravity of dissimulation in the *Misanthrope*, the effects of the dangers of misassorted alliances in *George Dandin*, of the tricks of domestics in *Les Fourberies de Scapin*, of the pedantic affectation of learning in *Les Femmes Savantes*, of the dupes who take physic and the knaves who administer it in the *Malade Imaginaire*,—all these, with similar aberrations, exposed and exploded by the pen of a single author, showed that Molière possessed, in a degree superior to all other men, the falcon's piercing eye to detect vice under every veil, or folly in every shape, and the talons with which to pounce upon either, as the natural prey of the satirist. No other writer of comedy ever soared through flights so many and so various.

We have said that the comedy of Molière never exhibits any touch of the sublime ; and from its not being attempted in those more serious pieces, as *Don Garcie* and *Mélicerte*, where a high strain of poetry might have been struck to advantage, we conceive that Molière did not possess that road to the human bosom. One passage alone strikes us as approaching to a very lofty tone. *Don Juan*, distinguished solely by the desperation of his courage, enters the tomb of the Commander, and ridicules the fears of his servant when he tells him that the statue has nodded in answer to the invitation delivered to him by his master's command. *Don Juan* delivers the same invitation in person, and the

statue again bends his head. Feeling a touch of the supernatural terror to which his lofty courage refuses to give way, his sole observation is "*Allons, sortons d'ici.*" A retreat, neither alarmed nor precipitated, is all which he will allow to the terrors of such a prodigy.

In like manner, although we are informed that Molière possessed feelings of sensibility too irritable for his own happiness in private life, his writings indicate no command of the pathetic. His lovers are always gallant and witty, but never tender or ardent. This is the case, not only where the love intrigue is only a means of carrying on the business of the scene, but in *Le Dépit Amoureux*, where the ardour of affection might have gracefully mingled with the tracasseries of the lovers' quarrels; and in *Psyché*, in which it is to be supposed the author would have introduced the passionate and pathetic, if he had possessed the power of painting it. Nor do any of his personages, in all the distresses in which the scene places them, ever make a strong impression on the feeling of the audience, who are only amused by the ludicrous situations to which the distresses give rise. The detected villainy of *Tartuffe* affects the feelings indeed strongly, but it is more from the gratification of honest resentment against a detected miscreant, than from any interest we take in the fortunes of the duped Orgon.

Neither did Molière ornament his dramatic pieces with poetical imagery, whether descriptive or moral. His mode of writing excluded the "morning sun, and all about gilding the eastern horizon." He wrote to the understanding, and not to the fancy, and was probably aware moreover that such poetical ornaments, however elegant when under the direction of good taste, are apt to glide into the opposite extreme, and to lead to that which Molière regarded as the greatest fault in composition, an affectation of finery approaching to the language of the *Précieuses Ridicules*. *Alceste*, in *Le Misanthrope*, expresses the opinion of the author on this subject:—

Ce style figuré, dont on se fait vanité  
Sort de bon caractère, et de la vérité,  
Ce n'est que jeu de mots, qu'affectation pure,  
Et ce n'est point ainsi que parle la nature.  
Le méchant gout de siècle en cela me fait peur,  
Nos pères tout grossiers l'avoient beaucoup meilleur.

In what, therefore, it may be asked, consisted the excellence of this entertaining writer, whose works, as often as we have opened a volume during the composition of this slight article, we have found it impossible to lay out of our hand until we had completed a scene, however little to our immediate purpose of consulting it? If Molière did not possess, or at least has not exercised, the powers of the sublime, the pathetic, or the imaginative in poetry, from whence do his works derive their undisputed and almost universal power of charming? We reply, from their truth and from their simplicity; from the powerful and

penetrating view of human nature, which could strip folly and vice of all their disguise, and expose them to laughter and scorn when they most hoped for honour and respect ; also from the extreme *naïveté* as well as force of the expressions which effect the author's purpose. A father consults his friends about the deep melancholy into which his daughter is fallen : one advises to procure for her a handsome piece of plate, beautifully sculptured, as an object which cannot fail to give pleasure to the most disconsolate mind. The celebrated answer, *vous êtes orfèvre, Monsieur Josse*, at once unmasks the private views of the selfish adviser, and has afforded a measure by which all men, from Molière's time to our own, may judge of the disinterested character of such friendly counsels. This short, dry, sudden, and unexpected humour of Molière, seconded as it always is by the soundest good sense, is one great proof of his knowledge of his art. The tragic may be greatly enlivened by some previous preparation, as the advance of a mighty host with its ensigns displayed has, even at a distance, an effect upon the nerves of those whom it is about to assail. But wit is most successful when it bursts from an unexpected ambush, and carries its point by surprise. The best jest will lose its effect on the stage, if so much preparation is employed as leads the spectator to anticipate what is coming, as it will suffer in society if introduced with the preface of "I'll tell you a good thing !" In this species of surprise Molière surpasses every writer of comedy, but the jest at which you laugh springs as naturally out of the subject, as if it had been obvious to your apprehension from the very commencement of the scene. A brief sentence, a word, even an exclamation, is often sufficient to produce the full effect of the ludicrous, as a spark will spring a mine, in the place and time when the explosion is least suspected. The most unexpected means in the hands of this great artist are also the most certain ; and you are first made sensible of what he has aimed at, when you admire his arrow quivering in the centre of the mark.

The depth and force of Molière's common sense is equally remarkable in displaying his own just and sound opinions, as in exposing the false taste and affectation of others. Ariste, Philinte, and the other personages of his drama, to whom (as the ancients did to their choruses) he has ascribed the task of moralizing upon the subject of the scene, and expressing the sentiments which must be supposed those of the author himself, have all the firmness, strength, and simplicity proper to the enunciation of truth and wisdom ; and much more of both will be found within the precincts of Molière's works, than in the formal lessons of men of less acute capacity.

Molière himself knew the force and value of his simplicity, although sometimes objected to by fastidious critics as hurrying him into occasional vulgarity. In order that he might not depart from it, he adopted the well-known practice of reading his pieces while in manuscript to

his housekeeper, La Foret, and observing the effect they produced on so plain, but shrewd and sensible a mind, before bringing them on the stage. The habit of being called into consultations of this kind had given the good dame such an accurate tact, that it was in vain that Molière tried to pass upon her the composition of another poet for his own. The circumstance proves how well she deserved to sit in the chair of censorship which her master had assigned her. Mons. Taschereau thinks that the opinion of La Foret was only demanded by Molière upon low and farcical subjects. But though we allow that some parts of his higher comedy might be above her sphere, we can easily conceive that the author might have an interest in knowing exactly how much his housekeeper,—at once an exact and favourable specimen of a great majority of his audiences,—might be able to comprehend of his higher comedy, and in what particulars it was elevated beyond the line of her understanding. Nor is it unreasonable to conceive, that an author who desired above all other things to be generally understood, should have paused on the passages which La Foret comprehended less perfectly, and omitted or explained what was like to prove *caviar* to the multitude. It would not be perhaps unnatural to suppose, that to the shrewd, frank, acute, and penetrating character of Molière's housekeeper we owe the original idea of those clever and faithful, but caustic and satirical, female domestics, the Toinettes and Nicoles, whom he has produced on the stage with so much effect.

Some readers may be disappointed, that after pronouncing Molière the prince of the writers of comedy, we should have limited the talents by which he attained such pre-eminence to the possession of common sense, however sound, of observation, however acute, and of expression, however forcible, true, and simple. It is not, however, by talents of a different class from those enjoyed by the rest of humanity that the ingredients which form great men are constituted. On the contrary, such peculiar tastes and talents only produce singularity. The real source of greatness in almost every department is an extraordinary proportion of some distinguishing quality proper to all mankind, and of which therefore all mankind, less or more, comprehends the character and the value. A man with four arms would be a monster for romance or for a show; it is the individual that can best make use of the ordinary conformation of his body, who obtains a superiority over his fellow-creatures by strength or agility. In a word, the general qualities of sound judgment, clear views, and powerful expression of what is distinctly perceived, acquire the same value, as they rise in degree above the general capacity of humanity, with that obtained by diamonds, which in proportion to their weight in carats become almost inestimable, while the smaller sparks of the same precious substance are of ordinary occurrence, and held comparatively in slight esteem.



## ON THE SUPERNATURAL IN FICTITIOUS COMPOSITION.\*

NO source of romantic fiction, and no mode of exciting the feelings of interest which the authors in that description of literature desire to produce, seems more directly accessible than the love of the supernatural. It is common to all classes of mankind, and perhaps is to none so familiar as to those who assume a certain degree of scepticism on the subject ; since the reader may have often observed in conversation, that the person who professes himself most incredulous on the subject of marvellous stories, often ends his remarks by indulging the company with some well-attested anecdote, which it is difficult or impossible to account for on the narrator's own principles of absolute scepticism. The belief itself, though easily capable of being pushed into superstition and absurdity, has its origin not only in the facts upon which our holy religion is founded, but upon the principles of our nature, which teach us that while we are probationers in this sublunary state, we are neighbours to, and encompassed by, the shadowy world, of which our mental faculties are too obscure to comprehend the laws, our corporeal organs too coarse and gross to perceive the inhabitants.

All professors of the Christian Religion believe that there was a time when the Divine Power showed itself more visibly on earth than in these our latter days ; controlling and suspending, for its own purposes, the ordinary laws of the universe ; and the Roman Catholic Church, at least, holds it as an article of faith, that miracles descend to the present time. Without entering into that controversy, it is enough that a firm belief in the great truths of our religion has induced wise and good men, even in Protestant countries, to subscribe to Dr. Johnson's doubts respecting supernatural appearances.

"That the dead are seen no more, said Imlac, I will not undertake to maintain against the concurrent and unvaried testimony of all ages, and of all nations. There is no people, rude or learned, among whom apparitions of the dead are not related and believed. This opinion, which perhaps prevails as far as human nature is diffused, could become

\* 1. Hoffmann's *Leben und Nachlass*. 2 vols. Berlin, 1823. 2. Hoffmann's *Serapionbrüder*. 6 vols. 1819—26. 3. Hoffmann's *Nachstücke*. 2 vols. 1816

universal only by its truth ; those that never heard of one another could not have agreed in a tale which nothing but experience can make credible. That it is doubted by single cavillers, can very little weaken the general evidence ; and some who deny it with their tongues, confess it by their fears."

Upon such principles as these there lingers in the breasts even of philosophers, a reluctance to decide dogmatically upon a point where they do not and cannot possess any, save negative, evidence. Yet this inclination to believe in the marvellous gradually becomes weaker. Men cannot but remark that (since the scriptural miracles have ceased) the belief in prodigies and supernatural events has gradually declined in proportion to the advancement of human knowledge ; and that since the age has become enlightened, the occurrence of tolerably well attested anecdotes of the supernatural character are so few, as to render it more probable that the witnesses have laboured under some strange and temporary delusion, rather than that the laws of nature have been altered or suspended. At this period of human knowledge the marvellous is so much identified with fabulous, as to be considered generally as belonging to the same class.

It is not so in early history, which is full of supernatural incidents ; and although we now use the word *romance* as synonymous with fictitious composition, yet as it originally only meant a poem or prose work contained in the Romaunce language, there is little doubt that the doughty chivalry who listened to the songs of the minstrel, "held each strange tale devoutly true," and that the feats of knighthood which he recounted, mingled with tales of magic and supernatural interference, were esteemed as veracious as the legends of the monks, to which they bore a strong resemblance. This period of society, however, must have long past before the Romancer began to select, and arrange with care, the nature of the materials out of which he constructed his story. It was not when society, however differing in degree and station, was levelled and confounded by one dark cloud of ignorance, involving the noble as well as the mean, that it need be scrupulously considered to what class of persons the author addressed himself, or with what species of decoration he ornamented his story. "Homo was then a common name for all men," and all were equally pleased with the same style of composition. This, however, was gradually altered. As the knowledge to which we have before alluded made more general progress, it became impossible to detain the attention of the better instructed class by the simple and gross fables to which the present generation would only listen in childhood, though they had been held in honour by their fathers during youth, manhood, and old age.

It was also discovered that the supernatural in fictitious composition requires to be managed with considerable delicacy, as criticism begins

to be more on the alert. The interest which it excites is indeed a powerful spring; but it is one which is peculiarly subject to be exhausted by coarse handling and repeated pressure. It is also of a character which it is extremely difficult to sustain, and of which a very small proportion may be said to be better than the whole. The marvellous, more than any other attribute of fictitious narrative, loses its effect by being brought much into view. The imagination of the reader is to be excited, if possible, without being gratified. If once, like Macbeth, we "sup full with horrors," our taste for the banquet is ended, and the thrill of terror with which we hear or read of a night-shriek, becomes lost in that sated indifference with which the tyrant came at length to listen to the most deep catastrophes that could affect his house. The incidents of a supernatural character are usually those of a dark and undefinable nature, such as arise in the mind of the Lady in the Mask of Comus,—incidents to which our fears attach more consequence, as we cannot exactly tell what it is we behold, or what is to be apprehended from it —

"A thousand fantasies  
Begin to throng into my memory,  
Of calling shapes and beck'ning shadows dire,  
And aery tongues that syllable men's names  
On sands, and shores, and desert wildernesses"

Burke observes upon obscurity, that it is necessary to make anything terrible, and notices "how much the notions of ghosts and goblins, of which none can form clear ideas, affect minds which give credit to the popular tales concerning such sorts of beings." He represents also, that no person "seems better to have understood the secret of heightening, or of setting terrible things in their strongest light, by the force of a judicious obscurity, than Milton. His description of Death, in the second book, is admirably studied; it is astonishing with what a gloomy pomp, with what a significant and expressive uncertainty of strokes and colouring, he has finished the portrait of the king of terrors

'The other shape,—  
If shape it might be called, which shape had none  
Distinguishable in member, joint, or limb  
Or substance might be called that shadow seemed,—  
For each seemed either, black he stood as night,  
Fierce as ten furies, terrible as hell,  
And shook a deadly dart. What seemed his head  
The likeness of a kingly crown had on'

In this description all is dark, uncertain, confused, terrible and sublime to the last degree."

The only quotation worthy to be mentioned along with the passage we have just taken down, is the well-known apparition introduced with circumstances of terrific obscurity in the book of Job :—

"Now a thing was secretly brought to me, and mine ears received a

little thereof. In thoughts from the visions of the night, when deep sleep falleth on men, fear came upon me, and trembling which made all my bones to shake. Then a spirit passed before my face : the hair of my flesh stood up. It stood still, but I could not discern the form thereof : an image was before mine eyes ; there was silence, and I heard a voice."

From these sublime and decisive authorities, it is evident that the exhibition of supernatural appearances in fictitious narrative ought to be rare, brief, indistinct, and such as may become a being to us so incomprehensible, and so different from ourselves, of whom we cannot justly conjecture whence he comes, or for what purpose, and of whose attributes we can have no regular or distinct perception. Hence it usually happens, that the first touch of the supernatural is always the most effective, and is rather weakened and defaced, than strengthened, by the subsequent recurrence of similar incidents. Even in Hamlet, the second entrance of the ghost is not nearly so impressive as the first ; and in many romances to which we could refer, the supernatural being forfeits all claim both to our terror and veneration, by condescending to appear too often ; to mingle too much in the events of the story, and above all, to become loquacious, or, as it is familiarly called, *chatty*. We have, indeed, great doubts whether an author acts wisely in permitting his goblin to speak at all, if at the same time he renders him subject to human sight. Shakspeare, indeed, has contrived to put such language in the mouth of the buried majesty of Denmark, as befits a supernatural being, and is by the style distinctly different from that of the living persons in the drama. In another passage he has had the boldness to intimate, by two expressions of similar force, in what manner and with what tone supernatural beings would find utterance :

" And the sheeted dead  
Did *squeak* and *gibber* in the Roman streets."

But the attempt in which the genius of Shakspeare has succeeded would probably have been ridiculous in any meaner hand ; and hence it is, that, in many of our modern tales of terror, our feelings of fear have, long before the conclusion, given way under the influence of that familiarity which begets contempt.

A sense that the effect of the supernatural in its more obvious application is easily exhausted, has occasioned the efforts of modern authors to cut new walks and avenues through the enchanted wood, and to revive, if [possible, by some means or other, the fading impression of its horrors.

The most obvious and inartificial mode of attaining this end is, by adding to and exaggerating the supernatural incidents of the tale. But far from increasing its effect, the principles which we have laid down incline us to consider the impression as usually weakened by exagger-

ated and laborious description. Elegance is in such cases thrown away, and the accumulation of superlatives, with which the narrative is encumbered, renders it tedious, or perhaps ludicrous, instead of becoming impressive or grand.

There is indeed one style of composition, of which the supernatural forms an appropriate part, which applies itself rather to the fancy than to the imagination, and aims more at amusing than at affecting or interesting the reader. To this species of composition belong the eastern tales, which contribute so much to the amusement of our youth, and which are recollected, if not reperused, with so much pleasure in our more advanced life. There are but few readers of any imagination who have not at one time or other in their life sympathized with the poet Collins, "who," says Dr. Johnson, "was eminently delighted with those flights of imagination, which pass the bounds of nature, and to which the mind is reconciled only by a passive acquiescence in popular traditions. He loved fairies, genii, giants, and monsters; he delighted to rove through the meadows of enchantment, to gaze on the magnificence of golden palaces, to repose by the waterfalls of Elysian gardens." It is chiefly the young and the indolent who love to be soothed by works of this character, which require little attention in the perusal. In our riper age we remember them as we do the joys of our infancy, rather because we loved them once, than that they still continue to afford us amusement. The extravagance of fiction loses its charms for our riper judgment; and notwithstanding that these wild fictions contain much that is beautiful and full of fancy, yet still unconnected as they are with each other, and conveying no result to the understanding, we pass them by as the championess Britomart rode along the rich strand.

Which as she overwent,  
She saw bestrewn all with rich array  
Of pearls and precious stones of great assay,  
And all the gravel mixt with golden ore  
Whereat she wondered much, but would not stay  
For gold, or pearls, or precious stones, one hour,  
But them despised all, for all was in her power

With this class of supernatural composition may be ranked, though inferior in interest, what the French call *Contes des Fées*; meaning, by that title, to distinguish them from the ordinary popular tales of fairy folks which are current in most countries. The *Conte des Fées* is itself a very different composition, and the fairies engaged are of a separate class, from those whose amusement is to dance round the mushroom in the moonlight, and mislead the belated peasant. The French *Fée* more nearly resembles the Peri of Eastern, or the Fata of Italian poetry. She is a superior being, having the nature of an elementary spirit, and possessing magical powers enabling her, to a considerable

extent, to work either good or evil. But whatever merit this species of writing may have attained in some dexterous hands, it has, under the management of others, become one of the most absurd, flat, and insipid possible. Out of the whole *Cabinet des Fées*, when we get beyond our old acquaintances of the nursery, we can hardly select five volumes, from nearly fifty, with any probability of receiving pleasure from them.

It often happens that when any particular style becomes somewhat antiquated and obsolete, some caricature, or satirical imitation of it, gives rise to a new species of composition. Thus the English Opera arose from the parody upon the Italian stage, designed by Gay, in the *Beggar's Opera*. In like manner, when the public had been inundated, *ad nauseam*, with Arabian tales, Persian tales, Turkish tales, Mogul tales, and legends of every nation east of the Bosphorus, and were equally annoyed by the increasing publication of all sorts of fairy tales,—Count Anthony Hamilton, like a second Cervantes, came forth with his satirical tales, destined to overturn the empire of Dives, of Genii, of Peris, *et hoc genus omne*.

Something too licentious for a more refined age, the Tales of Count Hamilton subsist as a beautiful illustration, showing that literary subjects, as well as the fields of the husbandman, may, when they seem most worn out and effete, be renewed and again brought into successful cultivation by a new course of management. The wit of Count Hamilton, like manure applied to an exhausted field, rendered the eastern tale more piquant, if not more edifying, than it was before. Much was written in imitation of Count Hamilton's style; and it was followed by Voltaire in particular, who in this way rendered the supernatural romance one of the most apt vehicles for circulating his satire. This, therefore, may be termed the comic side of the supernatural, in which the author plainly declares his purpose to turn into jest the miracles which he relates, and aspires to awaken ludicrous sensations without affecting the fancy—far less exciting the passions of the reader. By this species of delineation the reader will perceive that the supernatural style of writing is entirely travestied and held up to laughter, instead of being made the subject of respectful attention, or heard with at least that sort of imperfect excitement with which we listened to a marvellous tale of fairy-land. This species of satire—for it is often converted to satirical purposes—has never been more happily executed than by the French authors, although Wieland, and several other German writers, treading in the steps of Hamilton, have added the grace of poetry to the wit and to the wonders with which they have adorned this species of composition. Oberon, in particular, has been identified with our literature by the excellent translation of Mr. Sotheby, and is nearly as well known in England as in Germany. It would, however, carry us far too wide from our present purpose, were we to

consider the comi-heroic poetry which belongs to this class, and which includes the well-known works of Pulci, Berni—perhaps, in a certain degree, of Ariosto himself, who, in some passages at least, lifts his knightly vizor so far as to give a momentary glimpse of the smile which mantles upon his countenance.

One general glance at the geography of this most pleasing "*Londe of Faery*," leads us into another province, rough as it may seem and uncultivated, but which, perhaps on that very account, has some scenes abounding in interest. There are a species of antiquarians who, while others laboured to re-unite and ornament highly the ancient traditions of their country, have made it their business, *antiquos accedere fontes*, to visit the ancient springs and sources of those popular legends which, cherished by the grey and superstitious Elde, had been long forgotten in the higher circles, but are again brought forward and claim, like the old ballads of a country, a degree of interest even from their rugged simplicity. The *Deutsche Sagen* of the brothers Grimm, is an admirable work of this kind; assembling, without any affectation either of ornamental diction or improved incident, the various traditions existing in different parts of Germany respecting popular superstitions and the events ascribed to supernatural agency. There are other works of the same kind, in the same language, collected with great care and apparent fidelity. Sometimes trite, sometimes tiresome, sometimes childish, the legends which these authors have collected with such indefatigable zeal form nevertheless a step in the history of the human race; and, when compared with similar collections in other countries, seem to infer traces of a common descent which has placed one general stock of superstition within reach of the various tribes of mankind. What are we to think when we find the Jutt and the Fin telling their children the same traditions which are to be found in the nurseries of the Spaniard and Italian; or when we recognize in our own instance the traditions of Ireland or Scotland as corresponding with those of Russia? Are we to suppose that their similarity arises from the limited nature of human invention, and that the same species of fiction occurs to the imaginations of different authors in remote countries as the same species of plants are found in different regions without the possibility of their having been propagated by transportation from the one to others? Or ought we, rather, to refer them to a common source, when mankind formed but the same great family, and suppose that as philologists trace through various dialects the broken fragments of one general language, so antiquaries may recognize in distant countries parts of what was once a common stock of tradition? We will not pause on this inquiry, nor observe more than generally that, in collecting these traditions, the industrious editors have been throwing light, not only on the history of their own country in particular, but on that

of mankind in general There is generally some truth mingled with the abundant falsehood, and still more abundant exaggeration of the oral legend ; and it may be frequently and unexpectedly found to confirm or confute the meagre statement of some ancient chronicle. Often, too, the legend of the common people, by assigning peculiar features, localities, and specialities to the incidents which it holds in memory, gives life and spirit to the frigid and dry narrative which tells the fact alone, without the particulars which render it memorable or interesting.

It is, however, in another point of view, that we wish to consider those popular traditions in their collected state namely, as a peculiar mode of exhibiting the marvellous and supernatural in composition. And here we must acknowledge, that he who peruses a large collection of stories of fiends, ghosts, and prodigies, in hopes of exciting in his mind that degree of shuddering interest approaching to fear, which is the most valuable triumph of the supernatural, is likely to be disappointed A whole collection of ghost stories inclines us as little to fear as a jest book moves us to laughter. Many narratives, turning upon the same interest, are apt to exhaust it as in a large collection of pictures an ordinary eye is so dazzled with the variety of brilliant or glowing colours as to become less able to distinguish the merit of those pieces which are possessed of any.

But notwithstanding this great disadvantage, which is inseparable from the species of publication we are considering, a reader of imagination, who has the power to emancipate himself from the chains of reality, and to produce in his own mind the accompaniments with which the simple or rude popular legend ought to be attended, will often find that it possesses points of interest, of nature, and of effect, which, though irreconcilable to sober truth, carry with them something that the mind is not averse to believe, something in short of plausibility, which, let poet or romancer do their very best, they find it impossible to attain to. An example may, in a case of this sort, be more amusing to the reader than mere disquisition, and we select one from a letter received many years since from an amiable and accomplished nobleman some time deceased, not more distinguished for his love of science, than his attachment to literature in all its branches —

“It was in the night of, I think, the 14th of February, 1799, that there came on a dreadful storm of wind and drifting snow from the south-east, which was felt very severely in most parts of Scotland. On the preceding day a Captain M —, attended by three other men, had gone out a deer-shooting in that extensive tract of mountains which lies to the west of Dalnacardoch. As they did not return in the evening, nothing was heard of them. The next day, people were sent out in quest of them, as soon as the storm abated. After a long search the bodies were found, in a lifeless state, lying among the ruins of a *bothy*,



(a temporary hut,) in which it would seem Captain M—— and his party had taken refuge. The bothy had been destroyed by the tempest, and in a very astonishing manner. It had been built partly of stone, and partly of strong wooden uprights driven into the ground ; it was not merely blown down, but quite torn to pieces. Large stones, which had formed part of the walls, were found lying at the distance of one or two hundred yards from the site of the building, and the wooden uprights appeared to have been rent asunder by a force that had twisted them off as in breaking a tough stick. From the circumstances in which the bodies were found, it appeared that the men were retiring to rest at the time the calamity came upon them. One of the bodies, indeed, was found at a distance of many yards from the bothy ; another of the men was found upon the place where the bothy had stood, with one stocking off, as if he had been undressing ; Captain M—— was lying without his clothes, upon the wretched bed which the bothy had afforded, his face to the ground, and his knees drawn up. To all appearance the destruction had been quite sudden : yet the situation of the building was such as promised security against the utmost violence of the wind. It stood in a narrow recess, at the foot of a mountain, whose precipitous and lofty declivities sheltered it on every side, except in the front, and here, too, a hill rose before it, though with a more gradual slope. This extraordinary wreck of a building so situated, led the common people to ascribe it to a supernatural power. It was recollected by some who had been out shooting with Captain M—— about a month before, that while they were resting at this bothy, a shepherd lad had come to the door and inquired for Captain M——, and that the captain went out with the shepherd, and they walked away together, leaving the rest of the party in the bothy. After a time, Captain M—— returned alone ; he said nothing of what had passed between him and the lad, but looked very grave and thoughtful, and from that time there was observed to be a mysterious anxiety hanging about him. It was remembered, that one evening after dusk, when Captain M—— was in the bothy, some of his party that were standing before the door saw a fire blazing on the top of the hill which rises in front of it. They were much surprised to see a fire in such a solitary place, and at such a time, and set out to inquire into the cause of it, but when they reached the top of the hill, there was no fire to be seen ! It was remembered, too, that on the day before the fatal night, Captain M—— had shown a singular obstinacy in going forth upon his expedition. No representations of the inclemency of the weather, and of the dangers he would be exposed to, could restrain him. He said he *must* go, and was resolved to go. Captain M.'s character was likewise remembered ; that he was popularly reported to be a man of no principles, rapacious, and cruel ; that he had got money by procuring recruits from the highlands,—an unpopular

mode of acquiring wealth, and that, amongst other base measures for this purpose, he had gone so far as to leave a purse upon the road, and to threaten the man who had picked it up with an indictment for robbery if he did not enlist.\* Our informer added nothing more; he neither told us his own opinion nor that of the country; but left it to our own notions of the manner in which good and evil is rewarded in this life to suggest the Author of the miserable event. He seemed impressed with superstitious awe on the subject, and said, "There was na' the like seen in a' Scotland." The man is far advanced in years, and is a schoolmaster in the neighbourhood of Rannoch. He was employed by us as a guide upon Schehallion; and he told us the story one day as we walked before our horses, while we slowly wound up the road on the northern declivity of Rannoch. From this elevated ground we commanded an extensive prospect over the dreary mountains to the north, and amongst them our guide pointed out that at the foot of which was the scene of his dreadful tale. The account is, to the best of my recollection, just what I received from my guide. In some trifling particulars, from defect of memory, I may have misrepresented or added a little, in order to connect the leading circumstances; and I fear, also, that something may have been forgotten. Will you ask Mr P—— whether Captain M——, on leaving the bothy after his conversation with the shepherd lad, did not say that he must return there in a month after? I have a faint idea that it was so, and, if true, it would be a pity to lose it. Mr P—— may, perhaps, be able to correct or enlarge my account for you in other instances."

The reader will, we believe, be of our opinion, that the feeling of superstitious awe annexed to the catastrophe contained in this interesting narrative, could not have been improved by any circumstances of additional horror which a poet could have invented; that the incidents and the gloomy simplicity of the narrative are much more striking than they could have been rendered by the most glowing description; and that the old highland schoolmaster, the outline of whose tale is so judiciously preserved by the narrator, was a better medium for communicating such a tale than would have been the form of Ossian, could he have arisen from the dead on purpose.

It may however be truly said of the muse of romantic fiction,

"Mille habet ornatus"

The Professor Musaeus, and others of what we may call his school, conceiving, perhaps, that the simplicity of the unadorned popular legend was like to obstruct its popularity, and feeling, as we formerly observed, that though individual stories are sometimes exquisitely impressive, yet collections of this kind were apt to be rather bald

\* It is needless to say that this was a mere popular report, which might greatly misrepresent the character of the unfortunate sufferer

and heavy, employed their talents in ornamenting them with incident, in ascribing to the principal agents a peculiar character, and rendering the marvellous more interesting by the individuality of those in whose history it occurs. Two volumes were transcribed from the *Volksmärchen* of Musæus by the late Dr Beddoes, and published under the title of "Popular Tales of the Germans," which may afford the English reader a good idea of the style of that interesting work. It may, indeed, be likened to the *Tales* of Count Anthony Hamilton, already mentioned, but there is great room for distinction. "*Le Belier*," and "*Fleur d'Epine*," are mere parodies arising out of the fancy, but indebted for their interest to his wit. Musæus, on the other hand, takes the narration of the common legend, dresses it up after his own fashion, and describes, according to his own pleasure, the personages of his drama. Hamilton is a cook who compounds his whole banquet out of materials used for the first time, Musæus brings forward ancient traditions, like yesterday's cold meat from the larder, and, by dint of skill and seasoning, gives it a new relish for the meal of to day. Of course the merit of the *risfciamento* will fall to be divided in this case betwixt the effect attained by the ground work of the story, and that which is added by the art of the narrator. In the tale, for example, of the "*Child of Wonder*," what may be termed the raw material is short, simple, and scarce rising beyond the wonders of a nursery tale, but it is so much enlivened by the vivid sketch of the selfish old father who barter his four daughters against golden eggs and sacks of pearls, as to give an interest and zest to the whole story. "*The Spectre Barber*" is another of these popular tales, which, in itself singular and fantastic, becomes lively and interesting from the character of a good-humoured, well-meaning, thick-skulled burgher of Bremen, whose wit becomes sharpened by adversity, till he learns gradually to improve circumstances as they occur, and at length recovers his lost prosperity by dint of courage, joined with some degree of acquired sagacity.

A still different management of the wonderful and supernatural has, in our days, revived the romance of the earlier age with its history and its antiquities. The Baron de la Motte Fouqué has distinguished himself in Germany by a species of writing which requires at once the industry of the scholar and the talents of the man of genius. The efforts of this accomplished author aim at a higher mood of composition than the more popular romancer. He endeavours to recall the history, the mythology, the manners of former ages, and to offer to the present time a graphic description of those which have passed away. The travels of Thuidolf, for example, initiate the reader into that immense storehouse of Gothic superstition which is to be found in the *Edda* and the *Sagas* of northern nations, and to render the bold, honest, courageous character of his gallant young Scandinavian the

more striking, the author has contrasted it forcibly with the chivalry of the south, over which he asserts its superiority. In some of his works the baron has, perhaps, been somewhat profuse of his historical and antiquarian lore; he wanders where the reader has not skill to follow him, and we lose interest in the piece because we do not comprehend the scenes through which we are conducted. This is the case with some of the volumes where the interest turns on the ancient German history, to understand which, a much deeper acquaintance with the antiquities of that dark period is required than is like to be found in most readers. It would, we think, be a good rule in this style of composition, were the author to confine his historical materials to such as are either generally understood as soon as mentioned, or at least can be explained with brief trouble in such a degree as to make a reader comprehend the story. Of such happy and well-chosen subjects, the Baron de la Motte Fouqué has also shown great command on other occasions. His story of "Sintram and his Followers" is in this respect admirable, and the tale of his Naiad, Nixie, or Water Nymph\* is exquisitely beautiful. The distress of the tale—and, though relating to a fantastic being, it is *real distress*—arises thus. An elementary spirit renounces her right of freedom from human passion to become the spouse of a gallant young knight, who requites her with infidelity and ingratitude. The story is the contrast at once and the *pendant* to the "Diable Amoureux" of Cazotte, but is entirely free from a tone of *polissonnerie* which shocks good taste in its very lively prototype.

The range of the romance, as it has been written by this profusely inventive author, extends through the half-illuminated ages of ancient history into the Cimmerian frontiers of vague tradition, and, when traced with a pencil of so much truth and spirit as that of Fouqué, affords scenes of high interest, and forms, it cannot be doubted, the most legitimate species of romantic fiction, approaching in some measure to the epic in poetry, and capable in a high degree of exhibiting similar beauties.

We have thus slightly traced the various modes in which the wonderful and supernatural may be introduced into fictitious narrative, yet the attachment of the Germans to the mysterious has invented another species of composition, which, perhaps, could hardly have made its way in any other country or language. This may be called the FANTASTIC mode of writing,—in which the most wild and unbounded license is given to an irregular fancy, and all species of combination, however ludicrous, or however shocking, are attempted and executed without scruple. In the other modes of treating the supernatural, even that mystic region is subjected to some laws, however slight; and fancy, in wandering through it, is regulated by some probabilities in the wildest

\* Undine.

light. Not so in the fantastic style of composition, which has no restraint save that which it may ultimately find in the exhausted imagination of the author. This style bears the same proportion to the more regular romance, whether ludicrous or serious, which Farce, or rather *Pantomime*, maintains to Tragedy and Comedy. Sudden transformations are introduced of the most extraordinary kind, and wrought by the most inadequate means ; no attempt is made to soften their absurdity, or to reconcile their inconsistencies , the reader must be contented to look upon the gambols of the author as he would behold the flying leaps and incongruous transmutations of Harlequin, without seeking to discover either meaning or end further than the surprise of the moment.

Our English severity of taste will not easily adopt this wild and fantastic tone into our own literature , nay, perhaps will scarce tolerate it in translations. The only composition which approaches to it is the powerful romance of *Frankenstein*,\* and there, although the formation of a thinking and sentient being by scientific skill is an incident of the fantastic character, still the interest of the work does not turn upon the marvellous creation of Frankenstein's monster, but upon the feelings and sentiments which that creature is supposed to express as most natural—if we may use the phrase—to his unnatural condition and origin. In other words, the miracle is not wrought for the mere wonder, but is designed to give rise to a train of acting and reasoning in itself just and probable, although the *postulatum* on which it is grounded is in the highest degree extravagant. So far *Frankenstein*, therefore, resembles the "*Travels of Gulliver*," which suppose the existence of the most extravagant fictions, in order to extract from them philosophical reasoning and moral truth. In such cases the admission of the marvellous expressly resembles a sort of entry-money paid at the door of a lecture-room,—it is a concession which must be made to the author, and for which the reader is to receive value in moral instruction. But the *fantastic* of which we are now treating encumbers itself with no such conditions, and claims no further object than to surprise the public by the wonder itself. The reader is led astray by a freakish goblin, who has neither end nor purpose in the gambols which he exhibits, and the oddity of which must constitute their own reward. The only instance we know of this species of writing in the English language, is the ludicrous sketch in Mr. Geoffrey Crayon's tale of "*The Bold Dragoon*," in which the furniture dances to the music of a ghostly fiddler. The other ghost-stories of this well-known and admired author come within the legitimate bounds which Glanville, and other grave established authors, ascribe to the shadowy realms of spirits ; but we suppose Mr. Crayon to have exchanged his pencil in the following

\* By Mrs. Shelley.

scene, in order to prove that the pandours, as well as the regular forces of the ghostly world, were alike under his command.—

"By the light of the fire he saw a pale, weazen-faced fellow, in a long flannel gown, and a tall white night cap with a tassel to it, who sat by the fire with a bellows under his arm by the way of bagpipe, from which he forced the asthmatical music that had bothered my grandfather. As he played, too, he kept twitching about with a thousand queer contortions, nodding his head, and bobbing about his tasselled night-cap

"From the opposite side of the room, a long-backed, bandy-legged chair, covered with leather, and studded all over in a coxcombal fashion with little brass nails, got suddenly into motion, thrust out first a claw-foot, then a crooked arm, and at length making a leg, slid gracefully up to an easy-chair of tarnished brocade, with a hole in its bottom, and led it gallantly out in a ghostly minuet about the floor.

"The musician now played fiercer and fiercer, and bobbed his head and his night-cap about like mad. By degrees, the dancing mania seemed to seize upon all the other pieces of furniture. The antique long-bodied chairs paired off in couples and led down a country-dance, a three-legged stool danced a hornpipe, though horribly puzzled by its supernumerary leg; while the amorous tongs seized the shovel round the waist, and whirled it about the room in a German waltz. In short, all the moveables got in motion, pirouetting, hands across, right and left, like so many devils—all except a great clothes-press, which kept curtsying and curtsying in a corner like a dowager, in exquisite time to the music; being rather too corpulent to dance, or, perhaps, at a loss for a partner."\*

This slight sketch, from the hand of a master, is all that we possess in England corresponding to the Fantastic style of composition which we are now treating of. "Peter Schlemil," "The Devil's Elixir," and other German works of the same character, have made it known to us through the medium of translation. The author who led the way in this department of literature was Ernest Theodore William Hoffmann; the peculiarity of whose genius, temper, and habits, fitted him to distinguish himself where imagination was to be strained to the pitch of oddity and bizarrerie. He appears to have been a man of rare talent,—a poet, an artist, and a musician, but unhappily of a hypochondriac and whimsical disposition, which carried him to extremes in all his undertakings; so his music became capricious,—his drawings caricatures,—and his tales, as he himself termed them, fantastic extravagances. Bred originally to the law, he at different times enjoyed, under the Prussian and other governments, the small appointments of a subordinate magistrate; at other times he was left entirely to his own exertions, and supported himself as a musical composer for the stage.

\* Tales of a Traveller, by Washington Irving

as an author, or as a draughtsman. The shifts, the uncertainty, the precarious nature of this kind of existence, had its effect, doubtless, upon a mind which nature had rendered peculiarly susceptible of elation and depression ; and a temper, in itself variable, was rendered more so by frequent change of place and of occupation, as well as by the uncertainty of his affairs. He cherished his fantastic genius also with wine in considerable quantity, and indulged liberally in the use of tobacco. Even his outward appearance bespoke the state of his nervous system : a very little man with a quantity of dark-brown hair, and eyes looking through his elf-locks, that

" E'en like grey goss-hawk's stared wild,"

indicated that touch of mental derangement, of which he seems to have been himself conscious, when entering the following fearful memorandum in his diary :—

" Why, in sleeping and in waking, do I, in my thoughts, dwell upon the subject of insanity ? The out-pouring of the wild ideas that arise in my mind may perhaps operate like the breathing of a vein."

Circumstances arose also in the course of Hoffmann's unsettled and wandering life, which seemed to his own apprehension to mark him as one who " was not in the roll of common men." These circumstances had not so much of the extraordinary as his fancy attributed to them. For example ; he was present at deep play in a watering-place, in company with a friend, who was desirous to venture for some of the gold which lay upon the table. Betwixt hope of gain and fear of loss, distrusting at the same time his own luck, he at length thrust into Hoffmann's hand six gold pieces, and requested him to stake for him. Fortune was propitious to the young visionary, though he was totally inexperienced in the game, and he gained for his friend about thirty Fredericks d'or. The next evening Hoffmann resolved to try fortune on his own account. This purpose, he remarks, was not a previous determination, but one which was suddenly suggested by a request of his friend to undertake the charge of staking a second time on his behalf. He advanced to the table on his own account, and deposited on one of the cards the only two Fredericks d'or of which he was possessed. If Hoffmann's luck had been remarkable on the former occasion, it now seemed as if some supernatural power stood in alliance with him. Every attempt which he made succeeded—every card turned up propitiously.—

" My senses," he says, " became unmanageable, and as more and more gold streamed in upon me, it seemed as if I were in a dream, out of which I only awaked to pocket the money. The play was given up, as is usual, at two in the morning. In the moment when I was about to leave the room, an old officer laid his hand upon my shoulder, and re-

garding me with a fixed and severe look, said 'Young man, if you understand this business so well, the bank, which maintains free table, is ruined ; but if you do so understand the game, reckon upon it securely that the devil will be as sure of you as of all the rest of them ' Without waiting an answer, he turned away. The morning was dawning when I came home, and emptied from every pocket heaps of gold on the table. Imagine the feelings of a lad in a state of absolute dependance, and restricted to a small sum of pocket-money, who finds himself, as if by a thunderclap, placed in possession of a sum enough to be esteemed absolute wealth, at least for the moment ! But while I gazed on the treasure, my state of mind was entirely changed by a sudden and singular agony so severe, as to force the cold sweat-drops from my brow. The words of the old officer now, for the first time, rushed upon my mind in their fullest and most terrible acceptation. It seemed to me as if the gold, which glittered upon the table, was the earnest of a bargain by which the Prince of Darkness had obtained possession of my soul, which never more could escape eternal destruction. It seemed as if some poisonous reptile was sucking my heart's blood, and I felt myself fall into an abyss of despair."

Then the ruddy dawn began to gleam through the window, wood and plain were illuminated by its beams, and the visionary begun to experience the blessed feeling of returning strength, to combat with temptations, and to protect himself against the infernal propensity, which must have been attended with total destruction. Under the influence of such feelings Hoffmann formed a vow never again to touch a card, which he kept till the end of his life. "The lesson of the officer," says Hoffmann, "was good, and its effect excellent." But the peculiar disposition of Hoffmann made it work upon his mind more like an empiric's remedy than that of a regular physician. He renounced play less from the conviction of the wretched moral consequences of such a habit, than because he was actually afraid of the Evil Spirit in person.

In another part of his life Hoffmann had occasion to show, that his singularly wild and inflated fancy was not accessible to that degree of timidity connected with insanity, and to which poets, as being of "imagination all compact," are sometimes supposed to be peculiarly accessible. The author was in Dresden during the eventful period when the city was nearly taken by the allies, but preserved by the sudden return of Buonaparte and his guards from the frontiers of Silesia. He then saw the work of war closely carried on, venturing within fifty paces of the French sharp-shooters while skirmishing with those of the allies in front of Dresden. He had experience of a bombardment : one of the shells exploding before the house in which Hoffmann and Keller, the comedian, with bumpers in their hands to keep up their spirits, watched



the progress of the attack from an upper window The explosion killed three persons, Keller let his glass fall,—Hoffmann had more philosophy, he tossed off his bumper and moralized. "What is life!" said he, "and how frail the human frame that cannot withstand a splinter of heated iron!" He saw the field of battle when they were cramming with naked corpses the immense fosses which form the soldier's grave, the field covered with the dead and the wounded,—with horses and men; powder-waggons which had exploded, broken weapons, schakos, sabres, cartridge-boxes, and all the relics of a desperate fight He saw, too, Napoleon in the midst of his triumph, and heard him ejaculate to an adjutant, with the look and the deep voice of the lion, the single word "Voyons" It is much to be regretted that Hoffmann preserved but few memoranda of the eventful weeks which he spent at Dresden during this period, and of which his turn for remark and powerful description would have enabled him to give so accurate a picture In general, it may be remarked of descriptions concerning warlike affairs, that they resemble plans rather than paintings, and that, however calculated to instruct the tactician, they are little qualified to interest the general reader A soldier, particularly, if interrogated upon the actions which he has seen, is much more disposed to tell them in the dry and abstracted style of a gazette, than to adorn them with the remarkable and picturesque circumstances which attract the general ear. This arises from the natural feeling, that, in speaking of what they have witnessed in any other than a dry and affected professional tone, they may be suspected of a desire to exaggerate their own dangers,—a suspicion which, of all others, a brave man is most afraid of incurring, and which, besides, the present spirit of the military profession holds as amounting to bad taste It is, therefore, peculiarly unfortunate, that when a person unconnected with the trade of war, yet well qualified to describe its terrible peculiarities, chances to witness events so remarkable as those to which Dresden was exposed in the memorable 1813, he should not have made a register of what could not have failed to be deeply interesting. The battle of Leipsic, which ensued shortly after, as given to the public by an eye-witness—M. Shoberl, if we recollect the name aright—is an example of what we might have expected from a person of Hoffmann's talents, giving an account of his personal experience respecting the dreadful events which he witnessed. We could willingly have spared some of his grotesque works of *diablerie*, if we had been furnished, in their place, with the genuine description of the attack upon and the retreat from Dresden, by the allied army, in the month of August, 1813. It was the last decisive advantage which was obtained by Napoleon, and being rapidly succeeded by the defeat of Vandamme, and the loss of his whole *corps d'armée*, was the point from which his visible declension might be correctly dated. Hoffmann

was also a high-spirited patriot,—a true, honest, thorough-bred German, who had set his heart upon the liberation of his country, and would have narrated with genuine feeling the advantages which she obtained over her oppressor. It was not, however, his fortune to attempt any work, however slight, of an historical character, and the retreat of the French army soon left him to his usual habits of literary industry and convivial enjoyment.

It may, however, be supposed, that an imagination which was always upon the stretch received a new impulse from the scenes of difficulty and danger through which our author had so lately passed. Another calamity of a domestic nature must also have tended to the increase of Hoffmann's morbid sensibility. During a journey in a public carriage it chanced to be overturned, and the author's wife sustained a formidable injury on the head, by which she was a sufferer for a length of time.

All these circumstances, joined to the natural nervousness of his own temper, tended to throw Hoffmann into a state of mind very favourable, perhaps, to the attainment of success in his own peculiar mode of composition, but far from being such as could consist with that right and well-balanced state of human existence, in which philosophers have been disposed to rest the attainment of the highest possible degree of human happiness. Nerves which are accessible to that morbid degree of acuteness, by which the mind is incited, not only without the consent of our reason, but even contrary to its dictates, fall under the condition deprecated in the beautiful Ode to Indifference

Nor peace nor joy, the heart can know  
Which, like the needle, true  
Turns at the touch of joy or woe  
But, turning, trembles too.

The pain which in one case is inflicted by an undue degree of bodily sensitiveness, is in the other the consequence of our own excited imagination, nor is it easy to determine in which the penalty of too much acuteness or vividness of perception is most severely exacted. The nerves of Hoffmann in particular were strung to the most painful pitch which can be supposed. A severe nervous fever, about the year 1807, had greatly increased the fatal sensibility under which he laboured, which acting primarily on the body speedily affected the mind. He had himself noted a sort of graduated scale concerning the state of his imagination, which, like that of a thermometer, indicated the exaltation of his feelings up to a state not far distant, probably, from that of actual mental derangement. It is not, perhaps, easy to find expressions corresponding in English to the peculiar words under which Hoffmann classified his perceptions: but we may observe that he records, as the humour of one day, a deep disposition towards the romantic and religious, of a second, the perception of the exalted or excited humor-

ous ; of a third, that of the satirical humorous , of a fourth, that of the excited or extravagant musical sense ; of a fifth, a romantic mood turned towards the unpleasing and the horrible , of a sixth, bitter satirical propensities excited to the most romantic, capricious, and exotic degree , of a seventh, a state of quietism of mind open to receive the most beautiful, chaste, pleasing, and imaginative impressions of a poetical character , of an eighth, a mood equally excited, but accessible only to ideas the most unpleasing, the most horrible, the most unrestrained at once and most tormenting . At other times, the feelings which are registered by this unfortunate man of genius, are of a tendency exactly the opposite to those which he marks as characteristic of his state of nervous excitement. They indicate a depression of spirits, a mental callousness to those sensations to which the mind is at other times most alive, accompanied with that melancholy and helpless feeling which always attends the condition of one who recollects former enjoyments in which he is no longer capable of taking pleasure . This species of moral palsy is, we believe, a disease which more or less affects every one, from the poor mechanic who finds that his *hand*, as he expresses it, *is out*, that he cannot discharge his usual task with his usual alacrity, to the poet whose muse deserts him when perhaps he most desires her assistance . In such cases wise men have recourse to exercise or change of study , the ignorant and infatuated seek grosser means of diverting the paroxysm . But that which is to the person whose mind is in a healthy state but a transitory though disagreeable feeling, becomes an actual disease in such minds as that of Hoffmann, which are doomed to experience in too vivid perceptions in alternate excess, but far most often and longest in that which is painful,—the influence of an over-excited fancy . It is minds so conformed to which Burton applies his abstract of Melancholy, giving alternately the joys and the pains which arise from the influence of the imagination . The verses are so much to the present purpose, that we cannot better describe this changeful and hypochondriac system of mind than by inserting them

“ When to myself I act and smile,  
With pleasing thoughts the time beguile,  
By a brook-side or wood so green,  
Unheard, unsought for, and unseen,  
A thousand pleasures do me bless,  
And crown my soul with happiness  
All my joys besides are folly,  
None so sweet as Melancholy

“ When I lye, sit, or walk alone,  
I sigh, I grieve, making great moan,  
In a dark grove, or irksome den,  
With discontents and furies, then

A thousand miseries at once  
 Mine heavy heart and soul ensconce  
 All my griefs to this are jolly,  
 None so sour as Melancholy

" Methinks I hear, methinks I see,  
 Sweet musick, wonderous melody,  
 Towns, palaces, and cities fine ,  
 Here now, th-n, then, the world is mine  
 Rare beauties gallant ladies shine,  
 White'er is lovely or divine  
 All other joys to this are folly  
 None so sweet as Melancholy

" Methinks I hear methinks I see  
 Ghosts, goblins, fiends my phantasie  
 Presents a thousand ugly shapes,  
 Headless bears, black men and apes  
 Doleful outcries and fearful sights  
 My sad and dismal soul affrights  
 All my griefs to this are jolly,  
 None so damn'd as Melancholy "

In the transcendental state of excitation described in these verses, the painful and gloomy mood of the mind is, generally speaking, of much more common occurrence than that which is genial, pleasing, or delightful. Every one who chooses attentively to consider the workings of his own bosom, may easily ascertain the truth of this assertion, which indeed appears a necessary accompaniment of the imperfect state of humanity, which usually presents to us, in regard to anticipation of the future, so much more that is displeasing than is desirable ; in other words, where fear has a far less limited reign than the opposite feeling of hope. It was Hoffmann's misfortune to be peculiarly sensible of the former passion, and almost instantly to combine with any pleasing sensation, as it arose, the idea of mischievous or dangerous consequences. His biographer has given a singular example of this unhappy disposition, not only to apprehend the worst when there was real ground for expecting evil, but also to mingle such apprehension, capriciously and unseasonably, with incidents which were in themselves harmless and agreeable. "The devil," he was wont to say, "will put his hoof into everything, how good soever in the outset." A trifling but whimsical instance will best ascertain the nature of this unhappy propensity to expect the worst. Hoffmann, a close observer of nature, chanced one day to see a little girl apply to a market-woman's stall to purchase some fruit which had caught her eye and excited her desire. The wary trader wished first to know what she was able to expend on the purchase ; and when the poor girl, a beautiful creature, produced with exultation and pride a very small piece of money, the market-woman gave her to understand that there was nothing upon her stall

which fell within the compass of her customer's purse The poor little maiden, mortified and affronted, as well as disappointed, was retiring with tears in her eyes, when Hoffmann called her back, and arranging matters with the dealer, filled the child's lap with the most beautiful fruit Yet he had hardly time to enjoy the idea that he had altered the whole expression of the juvenile countenance from mortification to extreme delight and happiness, than he became tortured with the idea that he might be the cause of the child's death, since the fruit he had bestowed upon it might occasion a surfeit or some other fatal disease This presentiment haunted him until he reached the house of a friend, and it was akin to many which persecuted him during life, never leaving him to enjoy the satisfaction of a kind or benevolent action, and poisoning with the vague prospect of imaginary evil whatever was in its immediate tendency productive of present pleasure or promising future happiness

We cannot here avoid contrasting the character of Hoffmann with that of the highly imaginative poet Wordsworth, many of whose smaller poems turn upon a sensibility affected by such small incidents as that above-mentioned, with this remarkable difference—that the virtuous, and manly, and well regulated disposition of the author leads him to derive pleasing, tender, and consoling reflections from those circumstances which induced Hoffmann to anticipate consequences of a different character Such petty incidents are passed noteless over by men of ordinary minds Observers of poetical imagination, like Wordsworth and Hoffmann, are the chemists who can distil them into cordials or poisons

We do not mean to say that the imagination of Hoffmann was either wicked or corrupt, but only that it was ill-regulated and had an undue tendency to the horrible and the distressing Thus he was followed, especially in his hours of solitude and study, by the apprehension of mysterious danger to which he conceived himself exposed, and the whole tribe of demi gorgons, apparitions, and fanciful spectres and goblins of all kinds with which he has filled his pages, although in fact the children of his own imagination, were no less discomposing to him than if they had had a real existence and actual influence upon him The visions which his fancy excited are stated often to be so lively, that he was unable to endure them; and in the night, which was often his time of study, he was accustomed frequently to call his wife up from bed, that she might sit by him while he was writing, and protect him by her presence from the phantoms conjured up by his own excited imagination

Thus was the inventor, or at least first distinguished artist who exhibited the fantastic or supernatural grotesque in his compositions, so nearly on the verge of actual insanity, as to be afraid of the beings his

own fancy created. It is no wonder that to a mind so vividly accessible to the influence of the imagination, so little under the dominion of sober reason, such a numerous train of ideas should occur in which fancy had a large share and reason none at all. In fact, the grotesque in his compositions partly resembles the arabesque in painting, in which is introduced the most strange and complicated monsters, resembling centaurs, griffins, sphinxes, chimeras, rocs, and all other creatures of romantic imagination, dazzling the beholder as it were by the unbounded fertility of the author's imagination, and sating it by the rich contrast of all the varieties of shape and colouring, while there is in reality nothing to satisfy the understanding or inform the judgment. Hoffmann spent his life, which could not be a happy one, in weaving webs of this wild and imaginative character, for which after all he obtained much less credit with the public, than his talents must have gained if exercised under the restraint of a better taste or a more solid judgment. There is much reason to think that his life was shortened not only by his mental malady, of which it is the appropriate quality to impede digestion and destroy the healthful exercise of the powers of the stomach, but also by the indulgences to which he had recourse in order to secure himself against the melancholy, which operated so deeply upon the constitution of his mind. This was the more to be regretted, as, notwithstanding the dreams of an overheated imagination, by which his taste appears to have been so strangely misled, Hoffmann seems to have been a man of excellent disposition, a close observer of nature, and one who, if this sickly and disturbed train of thought had not led him to confound the supernatural with the absurd, would have distinguished himself as a painter of human nature, of which in its realities he was an observer and an admirer.

Hoffmann was particularly skilful in depicting characters arising in his own country of Germany. Nor is there any of her numerous authors who have better and more faithfully designed the upright honesty and firm integrity which is to be met with in all classes which come from the ancient Teutonic stock. There is one character in particular in the tale called "*Der Majorat*"—the Entail,—which is perhaps peculiar to Germany, and which makes a magnificent contrast to the same class of persons as described in romances, and as existing perhaps in real life in other countries. The justiciary B—— bears about the same office in the family of the baron Roderick von R——, a nobleman possessed of vast estates in Courland, which the generally-known Baillie Macwheeble occupied on the land of the baron of Bradwardine. The justiciary, for example, was the representative of the Seigneur in his feudal courts of justice; he superintended his revenues, regulated and controlled his household, and from his long acquaintance with the affairs of the family, was entitled to interfere both with advice

and assistance in any case of peculiar necessity. In such a character the Scottish author \* has permitted himself to introduce a strain of the roguery supposed to be incidental to the inferior classes of the law,—may be no unnatural ingredient. The Baillie is mean, sordid, a trickster, and a coward, redeemed only from our dislike and contempt by the ludicrous qualities of his character, by a considerable degree of shrewdness, and by the species of almost instinctive attachment to his master and his family which seem to overbalance in quality the natural selfishness of his disposition. The justiciary of R—— is the very reverse of this character. He is indeed an original, having the peculiarities of age and some of its satirical peevishness, but in his moral qualities he is well described by La Motte Fouqué, as a hero of ancient days in the night gown and slippers of an old lawyer of the present age. The innate worth, independence, and resolute courage of the justiciary seem to be rather enhanced than diminished by his education and profession, which naturally infers an accurate knowledge of mankind, and which, if practised without honour and honesty, is the basest and most dangerous fraud which an individual can put upon the public. Perhaps a few lines of Crabbe may describe the general tendency of the justiciary's mind, although marked, as we shall show, by loftier traits of character than those which the English poet has assigned to the worthy attorney of his borough.

He roughly honest, has been long a guide  
In borough business on the conquering side  
And seen so much of both sides and so long  
He thinks the bias of man's mind goes wrong  
Thus, though he's friendly he is still severe  
Surly though kind suspiciously sincere  
So much he's seen of baseness in the mind,  
That while a friend to man, he scorns mankind  
He knows the human heart and sees with dread  
By slight temptation how the strong are led  
He knows how interest can asunder rend  
The bond of parent master guardian, friend  
To form a new and a degrading tie  
Twixt needy vice and tempting villainy

The justiciary of Hoffmann, however, is of a higher character than the person distinguished by Crabbe. Having known two generations of the baronial house to which he is attached, he has become possessed of their family secrets, some of which are of a mysterious and terrible nature. This confidential situation, but much more the nobleness and energy of his own character, gives the old man a species of authority even over his patron himself, although the baron is a person of stately manners, and occasionally manifests a fierce and haughty temper. It would detain us too long to communicate a sketch of the story, though

\* Scott had not acknowledged the authorship of *Waverley* when this essay was written.

it is, in our opinion, the most interesting contained in the reveries of the author. Something, however, we must say to render intelligible the brief extracts which it is our purpose to make, chiefly to illustrate the character of the justiciary.

The principal part of the estate of the baron consisted in the Castle of R——sitten, a majorat, or entailed property, which gives name to the story, and which, as being such, the baron was under the necessity of making his place of residence for a certain number of weeks in every year, although it had nothing inviting in its aspect or inhabitants. It was a huge old pile overhanging the Baltic Sea, silent, dismal, almost uninhabited, and surrounded, instead of gardens and pleasure-grounds, by forests of black pines and firs which came up to its very walls. The principal amusement of the baron and his guests was to hunt the wolves and bears which tenanted these woods during the day, and to conclude the evening with a boisterous sort of festivity, in which the efforts made at passionate mirth and hilarity showed that, on the baron's side at least, they did not actually exist. Part of the castle was in ruins ; a tower built for the purpose of astrology by one of its old possessors, the founder of the majorat in question, had fallen down, and by its fall made a deep chasm, which extended from the highest turret down to the dungeon of the castle. The fall of the tower had proved fatal to the unfortunate astrologer ; the abyss which it occasioned was no less so to his eldest son. There was a mystery about the fate of the last, and all the facts known or conjectured respecting the cause of his fatal end were the following.

The baron had been persuaded by some expressions of an old steward, that treasures belonging to the deceased astrologer lay buried in the gulf which the tower had created by its fall. The entrance to this horrible abyss lay from the knightly hall of the castle, and the door, which still remained there, had once given access to the stair of the tower, but since its fall only opened on a yawning gulf full of stones. At the bottom of this gulf the second baron, of whom we speak, was found crushed to death, holding a wax-light fast in his hand. It was imagined that he had risen to seek a book from a library which also opened from the hall, and, mistaking the one door for the other, had met his fate by falling into the yawning gulf. Of this, however, there could be no certainty.

This double accident, and the natural melancholy attached to the place, occasioned the present Baron Roderick residing so little there ; but the title under which he held the estate laid him under the necessity of making it his residence for a few weeks every year. About the same time when he took up his abode there, the justiciary was accustomed to go thither for the purpose of holding baronial courts, and transacting his other official business. When the tale opens he sets out upon his



journey to R—sitten, accompanied by a nephew, the narrator of the tale, a young man, entirely new to the world, trained somewhat in the school of Werter,—romantic, enthusiastic, with some disposition to vanity,—a musician, a poet, and a coxcomb; upon the whole, however, a very well-disposed lad, with great respect for his grand-uncle, the justiciary, by whom he is regarded with kindness, but also as a subject of raillery. The old man carries him along with him partly to assist in his professional task, partly that he might get somewhat case-hardened by feeling the cold wind of the north whistle about his ears, and undoing the fatigue and dangers of a wolf-hunt.

They reach the old castle in the midst of a snow-storm, which added to the dismal character of the place, and which lay piled thick up by the very gate by which they should enter. All knocking of the postilion was in vain, and here we shall let Hoffmann tell his own story.

"The old man then raised his powerful voice 'Francis! Francis! where are you then? be moving, we freeze here at the door—the snow is peeling our faces raw, be stirring,—the devil! A watch-dog at length began to bark, and a wandering light was seen in the lower story of the building,—keys rattled, and at length the heavy folding-doors opened with difficulty. 'A fair welcome t'ye in this foul weather!' said old Francis, holding the lantern so high as to throw the whole light upon his shrivelled countenance, the features of which were twisted into a smile of welcome; the carriage drove into the court, we left it, and I was then for the first time aware that the ancient domestic was dressed in an old-fashioned lagger-livery, adorned with various loops and braids of lace. Only one pair of grey locks now remained upon his broad white forehead, the lower part of his face retained the colouring proper to the hardy huntsman, and, in spite of the crumpled muscles which writhed the countenance into something resembling a fantastic mask, there was an air of stupid yet honest kindness and good-humour, which glanced from his eyes, played around his mouth, and reconciled you to his physiognomy.

"'Well, old Frank!' said my great-uncle, as entering the ante-chamber he shook the snow from his pelisse, 'well, old man, is all ready in my apartments? Have the carpets been brushed,—the beds properly arranged,—and good fires kept in my room yesterday and to-day?' 'No!' answered Frank with great composure, 'no, worthy sir! not a bit of all that has been done.' 'Good God!' said my uncle, 'did not I write in good time,—and do not I come at the exact day? Was ever such a piece of stupidity? And now I must sleep in rooms as cold as ice!' 'Indeed, worthy Mr Justiciary,' said Francis with great solemnity, while he removed carefully with the snuffers a glowing waster from the candle, flung it on the floor, and trod cautiously upon it, 'you must know that the airing would have been to no purpose, for the wind

and snow have driven in, in such quantities, through the broken window-frames —so—' 'What!' said my uncle, interrupting him, throwing open his pelisse, and placing both arms on his sides, 'what! the windows are broken, and you, who have charge of the castle, have not had them repaired?' 'That would have been done, worthy sir,' answered Francis, with the same indifference, 'but people could not get rightly at them on account of the heaps of rubbish and stone that are lying in the apartment.' 'And how, in a thousand devils' names,' said my great uncle, 'came rubbish and stones into my chamber?' 'God bless you, my young master,' said the old man, episodically to me, who happened at the moment to sneeze, then proceeded gravely to answer the justiciary, that the stones and rubbish were those of a partition-wall which had fallen in the last great tempest. 'What, the devil! have you had an earthquake?' said my uncle angrily. 'No, worthy sir,' replied the old man, 'but three days ago the heavy paved roof of the justice-hall fell in with a tremendous crash.' 'May the devil—,' said my uncle, breaking out in a passion, and about to let fly a heavy oath; but suddenly checking himself, he lifted submissively his right hand towards Heaven, while he moved with his left his fur cap from his forehead, was silent for an instant, then turned to me and spoke cheerfully. 'In good truth, kinsman, we had better hold our tongues and ask no further questions, else we shall only learn greater mishaps, or perhaps the whole castle may come down upon our heads. But Frank,' said he, 'how could you be so stupid as not to get another apartment arranged and aired for me and this youth? Why did you not put some large room in the upper-story of the castle in order for the court-day?' 'That is already done,' said the old man, pointing kindly to the stairs, and beginning to ascend with the light. 'Now, only think of the old houlet, that could not say this at once,' said my uncle, while we followed the domestic. We passed through many long, high, vaulted corridors,—the flickering light carried by Francis throwing irregular gleams on the thick darkness, pillars, capitals, and arches of various shapes appeared to totter as we passed them; our own shadows followed us with giant steps, and the singular pictures on the wall, across which these shadows passed, seemed to waver and to tremble, and their voices to whisper amongst the heavy echoes of our footsteps, saying—'Wake us not, wake us not, the enchanted inhabitants of this ancient fabric!' At length, after we had passed along the range of cold and dark apartments, Francis opened a saloon in which a large blazing fire received us with a merry crackling, resembling a hospitable welcome. I felt myself cheered on the instant I entered the apartment; but my great-uncle remained standing in the middle of the hall, looked round him, and spoke with a very serious and almost solemn tone. 'This, then, must be our hall of justice!' Francis raising the light so that it fell upon an oblong whitish patch of the large

dark wall, which patch had exactly the size and form of a walled-up or condemned door, said in a low and sorrowful tone, 'Justice has been executed here before now' 'How came you to say that, old man?' said my uncle, hastily throwing the pelisse from his shoulders 'The word escaped me,' said Francis as he lighted the candles on the table, and opened the door of a neighbouring apartment where two beds were comfortably prepared for the reception of the guests. In a short time a good supper smoked before us in the hall, to which succeeded a bowl of punch, mixed according to the right northern fashion, and it may therefore be presumed none of the weakest Tired with his journey, my uncle betook himself to bed; but the novelty and strangeness of the situation, and even the excitement of the liquor I had drank, prevented me from thinking of sleep. The old domestic removed the supper table, made up the fire in the chimney, and took leave of me after his manner with many a courteous bow.

"And now I was left alone in the wide high hall of chivalry, the hail-storm had ceased to patter, and the wind to howl, the sky was become clear without-doors, and the full moon streamed through the broad transome windows, illumining, as if by magic, all those dark corners of the singular apartment into which the imperfect light of the wax candles and the chimney-fire could not penetrate As frequently happens in old castles, the walls and roof of the apartment were ornamented,—the former with heavy panneling, the latter with fantastic carving gilded and painted of different colours The subjects chiefly presented the desperate hunting matches with bears and wolves, and the heads of the animals, being in many cases carved, projected strangely from the painted bodies, and even, betwixt the fluttering and uncertain light of the moon and of the fire, gave a grisly degree of reality Amidst these pieces were hung portraits, as large as life, of knights striding forth in hunting-dresses, probably the chase-loving ancestors of the present baron. Everything, whether of painting or of carving, showed the dark and decayed colours of times long passed, and rendered more conspicuous the blank and light-coloured part of the wall before noticed It was in the middle space betwixt two doors which led off through the hall into side-apartments, and I could now see that it must itself have been a door, built up at a later period, but not made to correspond with the rest of the apartment, either by being painted over or covered with carved work. Who knows not that an unwonted and somewhat extraordinary situation possesses a mysterious power over the human spirit? Even the dullest fancy will awake in a secluded valley surrounded with rocks, or within the walls of a gloomy church, and will be taught to expect in such a situation things different from those encountered in the ordinary course of human life. Conceive too that I was only a lad of twenty years of age, and that I had drunk several glasses of strong

liquor, and it may easily be believed that the knight's hall in which I sat made a singular impression on my spirit. The stillness of the night is also to be remembered,—broken, as it was, only by the heavy waving of the billows of the sea, and the solemn piping of the wind, resembling the tones of a mighty organ touched by some passing spirit; the clouds wandering across the moon, drifted along the arched windows, and seemed giant shapes gazing through the rattling casements; in short, in the slight shuddering which crept over me I felt as if an unknown world was about to expand itself visibly before me. This feeling, however silly, only resembled the slight and not unpleasing shudder with which we read or hear a well-told ghost story. It occurred to me in consequence that I could find no more favourable opportunity for reading the work to which, like most young men of a romantic bias, I was peculiarly partial, and which I happened to have in my pocket. It was 'the Ghost Seer' of Schiller: I read—and read, and in doing so excited my fancy more and more, until I came to that part of the tale which seizes on the imagination with so much fervour, viz. the wedding feast in the house of the Count von B—. Just at the very moment when I arrived at the passage where the bloody spectre of Gironimo entered the wedding apartment, the door of the knights' hall, which led into an ante-chamber, burst open with a violent shock;—I started up with astonishment and the book dropped from my hand; but, as in the same moment all was again still, I became ashamed of my childish terror;—it might be by the impulse of the rushing night-wind, or by some other natural cause, that the door was flung open. 'It is nothing,' I said aloud, 'my overheated fancy turns the most natural accidents into the supernatural.' Having thus reassured myself, I picked up the book and again sat down in the elbow-chair; but then I heard something move in the apartment with measured steps, sighing at the same time, and sobbing in a manner which seemed to express at once the extremity of inconsolable sorrow, and the most agonizing pain which the human bosom could feel. I tried to believe that this could only be the moans of some animal enclosed somewhere near our part of the house, I reflected upon the mysterious power of the night, which makes distant sounds appear as if they were close beside us, and I expostulated with myself for suffering the sounds to affect me with terror. But as I thus debated the point, a sound like that of scratching mixed with louder and deeper sighs, such as could only be extracted by the most acute mental agony, or during the parting pang of life, was indisputably heard upon the very spot where the door appeared to have been built up: 'Yet it *can* only be some poor animal in confinement,—I shall call out aloud, or I shall stamp with my foot upon the ground, and then either everything will be silent or the animal will make itself be known;' so I purposed, but the blood stopped in my veins,—a cold sweat stood

upon my forehead,—I remained fixed in my chair, not daring to rise, far less to call out. The hateful sounds at last ceased,—the steps were again distinguished,—it seemed as if life and the power of motion returned to me,—I started up and walked two paces forward, but in that moment an ice cold night-breeze whistled through the hall, and at the same time the moon threw a bright light upon the picture of a very grave, well-nigh terrible-looking man, and it seemed to me as if I plainly heard a warning voice amid the deep roar of the sea and the shriller whistle of the night-wind speaking the warning—‘No farther! No farther! Lest thou encounter the terrors of the spiritual world!’ The door now shut with the same violent clash with which it had burst open, I heard the sound of steps retiring along the ante-room and descending the staircase the principal door of the castle was opened and shut with violence, then it seemed as if a horse was led out of the stable, and, after a short time, as if it was again conducted back to its stall. After this, all was still, at the same time I became aware that my uncle in the neighbouring apartment was struggling in his sleep and groaned like a man afflicted with a heavy dream. I hastened to awake him, and when I had succeeded, I received his thanks for the service. ‘Thou hast done well, kinsman, to awake me,’ he said; ‘I have had a detestable dream, the cause of which is this apartment and the hall, which set me a thinking upon past times and upon many extraordinary events which have here happened. But now we shall sleep sound till morning.’”

With morning the business of the judiciary’s office began. But, abridging the young lawyer’s prolonged account of what took place, the mystic terror of the preceding evening retained so much effect on his imagination, that he was disposed to find out traces of the supernatural in everything which met his eyes; even two respectable old ladies, aunts of Baron Rodolick von R——, and the sole old-fashioned inhabitants of the old-fashioned castle, had in their French caps and furbelows a ghostly and phantom-like appearance in his prejudiced eyes. The judiciary becomes disturbed by the strange behaviour of his assistant; he enters into expostulation upon the subject so soon as they were in private.

“‘What is the matter with you?’ he said; ‘thou speakest not, thou eatest not, thou drinkest not;—art thou sick; or dost thou lack any thing? in short, what a fend ails thee?’ I embraced the opportunity to communicate all the horrible scenes of the preceding night; not even concealing from my grand-uncle that I had drunk a good deal of punch, and had been reading ‘the Ghost Seer’ of Schiller. ‘This, I must allow,’ I added, ‘because it is possible, that my toiling and overheated fancy might have created circumstances which had no other existence.’ I now expected that my kinsman would read me a sharp

lecture on my folly, or treat me with some bitter jibes . but he did neither ; he became very grave, looked long on the ground, then suddenly fixed a bold and glowing look upon me, ‘kinsman,’ said he, ‘I am unacquainted with your book ; but you have neither it nor the liquor to thank for the ghostly exhibition you have described. Know, that I had a dream to the self-same purpose. I thought I sat in the hall as thou didst ; but whereas *thou* only heardest sounds, *I* beheld, with the eyes of my spirit, the appearances which these voices announced. Yes ! I beheld the inhuman monster as he entered,—saw him glide to the condemned door,—saw him scratch on the wall in comfortless despair until the blood burst from under his wounded nails , then I beheld him lead a horse from the stable and again conduct it back ,—didst thou not hear the cock crow in the distant village ? it was then that thou didst awake me, and I soon got the better of the terrors by which this departed sinner is permitted to disturb the peace of human life’ The old man stopped, and I dared not ask further questions, well knowing he would explain the whole to me when it was proper to do so After a space, during which he appeared wrapt in thought, my uncle proceeded ‘kinsman, now that thou knowest the nature of this disturbance, hast thou the courage once more to encounter it, having me in thy company ?’ It was natural that I should answer in the affirmative, the rather as I found myself mentally strengthened to the task ‘Then will we,’ proceeded the old man, ‘watch together this ensuing night. There is an inward voice which tells me this wicked spirit must give way, not so much to the force of my understanding as to my courage, which is built upon a firm confidence in God. I feel, too, that it is no rash or criminal undertaking, but a bold and pious duty that I am about to discharge. When I risk body and life to banish the evil spirit who would drive the sons from the ancient inheritance of their fathers, it is in no spirit of presumption or vain curiosity ; since, in the firm integrity of mind, and the pious confidence which lives within me, the most ordinary man is and remains a victorious hero But should it be God’s will that the wicked spirit shall have power over me, then shalt thou, kinsman, make it known that I died in honourable Christian combat with the hellish spectre which haunts this place. For thee, thou must keep thyself at a distance, and no ill will befall thee.’

“The evening was spent in various kinds of employment ; the supper was set as before in the knight’s hall , the full moon shone clear through the glimmering clouds ; the billows of the sea roared ; and the night-wind shook the rattling casements. However inwardly excited, we compelled ourselves to maintain an indifferent conversation The old man had laid his repeating watch on the table , it struck twelve,—then the door flew open with a heavy crash, and, as on the former night, slow and light footsteps traversed the hall, and the sighs and

groans were heard as before. My uncle was pale as death ; but his eyes streamed with unwonted fire, and as he stood upright, his left arm dropped by his side and his right uplifted toward heaven, he had the air of a hero in the act of devotion. The sighs and groans became louder and more distinguishable, and the hateful sounds of scratching upon the wall were again heard more odiously than on the former night. The old man then strode forward right towards the condemned door, with a step so bold and firm that the hall echoed back his tread. He stopped close before the spot where the ghostly sounds were heard yet more and more wildly, and spoke with a strong and solemn tone such as I never heard him before use : ‘Daniel ! Daniel !’ he said, ‘what makest thou here at this hour ?’ A dismal screech was the reply, and a sullen heavy sound was heard, as when a weighty burden is cast down upon the floor. ‘Seek grace and mercy before the throne of the Highest !’ continued my uncle, with a voice even more authoritative than before, ‘there is thy only place of appeal ! Hence with thee out of the living world in which thou hast no longer a portion !’ It seemed as if a low wailing was heard to glide through the sky and to die away in the roaring of the storm which began now to awaken. Then the old man stepped to the door of the hall and closed it with such vehemence that the whole place echoed. In his speech, in his gestures, there seemed something almost superhuman which filled me with a species of holy fear. As he placed himself in the arm-chair, the fixed sternness of his rigid brow began to relax ; his look appeared more clear ; he folded his hands and prayed internally. Some minutes passed away ere he said, with that mild tone which penetrates so deeply into the heart, the simple words, ‘now, kinsman ?’ Overcome by horror, anxiety, holy reverence, and love, I threw myself on my knees, and moistened with warm tears the hand which he stretched out to me ; the old man folded me in his arms, and, after he had pressed me to his bosom with heartfelt affection, said with a feeble and exhausted voice, ‘now, kinsman, shall we sleep soft and undisturbed !’”

The spirit returned no more. It was the ghost—as may have been anticipated—of a false domestic, by whose hand the former baron had been precipitated into the gulf which yawned behind the new wall so often mentioned in the narrative.

The other adventures in the castle of R——sitten are of a different cast, but strongly mark the power of delineating human character which Hoffmann possessed. Baron Roderick and his lady arrive at the castle with a train of guests. The lady is young, beautiful, nervous, and full of sensibility,—fond of soft music, pathetic poetry, and walks by moonlight ; the rude company of huntsmen by which the baron is surrounded, their boisterous sports in the morning, and their no less boisterous mirth in the evening, is wholly foreign to the disposition of

the Baroness Seraphina, who is led to seek relief in the society of the nephew of the justiciary, who can make sonnets, repair harpsichords, sustain a part in an Italian duet, or in a sentimental conversation. In short, the two young persons, without positively designing anything wrong, are in a fair way of rendering themselves guilty and miserable, were they not saved from the snare which their passion was preparing by the calm observation, strong sense, and satirical hints of our friend the justiciary.

It may therefore be said of this personage, that he possesses that true and honourable character which we may conceive entitling a mortal as well to overcome the malevolent attacks of evil beings from the other world, as to stop and control the course of moral evil in that we inhabit, and the sentiment is of the highest order by which Hoffmann ascribes to unsullied masculine honour and integrity that same indemnity from the power of evil which the poet claims for female purity.

Some say no evil thing that walks by night  
In fog or fire, by lile or moonish fen  
Blue meagre hag, or stubborn unkind ghost  
That breaks his magic chain at curfew time  
No goblin nor swart fiend of the mine  
Hath hurtful power at true virginity

What we admire, therefore, in the extracts which we have given is not the mere wonderful or terrible part of the story, though the circumstances are well narrated, it is the advantageous light in which it places the human character as capable of being armed with a strong sense of duty, and of opposing itself, without presumption but with confidence, to a power of which it cannot estimate the force, of which it hath every reason to doubt the purpose, and at the idea of confronting which our nature recoils.

Before we leave the story of "the Lintail," we must notice the conclusion, which is beautifully told, and will recall to most readers who are passed the prime of life, feelings which they themselves must occasionally have experienced. Many, many years after the baronial race of R—— had become extinguished, accident brought the young nephew, now a man in advanced age, to the shores of the Baltic. It was night, and his eye was attracted by a strong light which spread itself along the horizon.

"What fire is that before us, postilion?" said I. "It is no fire," answered he, "it is the beacon light of R——sitten." "Of R——sitten!" He had scarce uttered the words, when the picture of the remarkable days which I had passed in that place arose in clear light in my memory. I saw the baron,—I saw Seraphina,—I saw the strange-looking old aunts,—I saw myself, with a fair boyish countenance, out of which the mother's milk seemed not yet to have been pressed, my frock



of delicate azure blue, my hair curled and powdered with the utmost accuracy, the very image of the lover sighing like a furnace, who tunes his sonnets to his mistress's eye-brows. Amidst a feeling of deep melancholy, fluttered like sparkles of light the recollection of the justiciary's rough jests, which appeared to me now much more pleasant than when I was the subject of them. Next morning I visited the village, and made some inquiries after the baronial steward. 'With your favour, Sir,' said the postilion, taking the pipe out of his mouth, and touching his night-cap, 'there is here no baronial steward, the place belongs to his Majesty, and the royal superintendent is still in bed.' On further questions, I learned that the Baron Roderick von R—— having died without descendants, the entailed estate, according to the terms of the grant, had been vested in the crown. I walked up to the castle, which lay now in a heap of ruins. An old peasant, who came out of the pine wood, informed me that a great part of the stones had been used to build the beacon tower, he told me too of the spectre which in former times had haunted the spot, and asserted that when the moon was at the full, the voice of lamentation was still heard among the ruins."

If the reader has, in a declining period of his life, revisited the scenes of youthful interest, and received from the mouth of strangers an account of the changes which have taken place, he will not be indifferent to the simplicity of this conclusion.

The passage which we have quoted, while it shows the wildness of Hoffmann's fancy, evinces also that he possessed power which ought to have mitigated and allayed it. Unfortunately, his taste and temperament directed him too strongly to the grotesque and fantastic,—carried him too far "*extra mœnia flammantia mundi*," too much beyond the circle not only of probability but even of possibility, to admit of his composing much in the better style which he might easily have attained. The popular romance, no doubt, has many walks, nor are we at all inclined to halloo the dogs of criticism against those whose object is merely to amuse a passing hour. It may be repeated with truth, that in this path of light literature, "*tout genre est permis hors les genres ennuyeux*," and of course, an error in taste ought not to be followed up and hunted down as if it were a false maxim in morality, a delusive hypothesis in science, or a heresy in religion itself. Genius too is, we are aware, capricious, and must be allowed to take its own flights, however eccentric, were it but for the sake of experiment. Sometimes, also, it may be eminently pleasing to look at the wildness of an arabesque painting executed by a man of rich fancy. But we do not desire to see genius expand or rather exhaust itself upon themes which cannot be reconciled to taste; and the utmost length in which we can indulge a turn to the fantastic is, where it tends to excite agreeable and pleasing ideas.

We are not called upon to be equally tolerant of such capriccios as are not only startling by their extravagance, but disgusting by their horrible import. Moments there are, and must have been, in the author's life, of pleasing as well as painful excitation ; and the champagne which sparkled in his glass must have lost its benevolent influence if it did not sometimes wake his fancy to emotions which were pleasant as well as whimsical. But as repeatedly the tendency of all overstrained feelings is directed towards the painful, and the fits of lunacy, and the crises of very undue excitement which approach to it, are much more frequently of a disagreeable than of a pleasant character, it is too certain that we possess in a much greater degree the power of exciting in our minds what is fearful, melancholy, or horrible, than of commanding thoughts of a lively and pleasing character. The grotesque, also, has a natural alliance with the horrible ; for that which is out of nature can be with difficulty reconciled to the beautiful. Nothing, for instance, could be more displeasing to the eye than the palace of that crack-brained Italian prince, which was decorated with every species of monstrous sculptures which a depraved imagination could suggest to the artist. The works of Callot, though evincing a wonderful fertility of mind, are in like manner regarded with surprise rather than pleasure. If we compare his fertility with that of Hogarth, they resemble each other in extent ; but in that of the satisfaction afforded by a close examination the English artist has wonderfully the advantage. Every new touch which the observer detects amid the rich superfluities of Hogarth is an article in the history of human manners, if not of the human heart ; while, on the contrary, in examining microscopically the diablerie of Callot's pieces, we only discover fresh instances of ingenuity thrown away, and of fancy pushed into the regions of absurdity. The works of the one painter resemble a garden carefully cultivated, each nook of which contains something agreeable or useful ; while those of the other are like the garden of the sluggard, where a soil equally fertile produces nothing but wild and fantastic weeds.

Hoffmann has in some measure identified himself with the ingenious artist upon whom we have just passed a censure by his title of "*Night Pieces after the manner of Callot*," and in order to write such a tale, for example, as that called "*the Sandman*," he must have been deep in the mysteries of that fanciful artist, with whom he might certainly boast a kindred spirit. We have given an instance of a tale in which the wonderful is, in our opinion, happily introduced, because it is connected with and applied to human interest and human feeling, and illustrates with no ordinary force the elevation to which circumstances may raise the power and dignity of the human mind. The following narrative is of a different class :

"half horror and half whim,  
Like fiends in glee, ridiculously grim."

Nathaniel, the hero of the story, acquaints us with the circumstances of his life in a letter addressed to Lothair, the brother of Clara ; the one being his friend, the other his betrothed bride. The writer is a young man of a fanciful and hypochondriac temperament, poetical and metaphysical in an excessive degree, with precisely that state of nerves which is most accessible to the influence of imagination. He communicates to his friend and his mistress an adventure of his childhood. It was, it seems, the custom of his father, an honest watchmaker, to send his family to bed upon certain days earlier in the evening than usual, and the mother in enforcing this observance used to say, "To-bed, children, *the Sandman* is coming !" In fact, on such occasions, Nathaniel observed that after their hour of retiring, a knock was heard at the door, a heavy step echoed on the staircase, some person entered his father's apartments, and occasionally a disagreeable and suffocating vapour was perceptible through the house. This then was the Sandman ; but what was his occupation, and what was his purpose ? The nursery-maid being applied to, gave a nursery-maid's explanation, that the Sandman was a bad man, who flung sand in the eyes of little children who did not go to bed. This increased the terror of the boy, but at the same time raised his curiosity. He determined to conceal himself in his father's apartment and wait the arrival of the nocturnal visitor ; he did so, and the Sandman proved to be no other than the lawyer Copelius, whom he had often seen in his father's company. He was a huge left-handed, splay-footed sort of personage, with a large nose, great ears, exaggerated features, and a sort of ogre-like aspect, which had often struck terror into the children before this ungainly limb of the law was identified with the terrible Sandman. Hoffmann has given a pencil sketch of this uncouth figure, in which he has certainly contrived to represent something as revolting to adults as it might be terrible to children. He was received by the father with a sort of humble observance ; a secret stove was opened and lighted, and they instantly commenced chemical operations of a strange and mysterious description, but which immediately accounted for that species of vapour which had been perceptible on other occasions. The gestures of the chemists grew fantastic, their faces, even that of the father, seemed to become wild and terrific as they prosecuted their labours ; the boy became terrified, screamed and left his hiding-place ; was detected by the alchemist, for such Copelius was, who threatened to pull out his eyes, and was with some difficulty prevented by the father's interference from putting hot ashes in the child's face. Nathaniel's imagination was deeply impressed by the terror he had undergone, and a nervous fever was the conse-

quence, during which the horrible figure of the disciple of Paracelsus was the spectre which tormented his imagination.

After a long interval, and when Nathaniel was recovered, the nightly visits of Copelius to his pupil were renewed, but the latter promised his wife that it should be for the last time. It proved so, but not in the manner which the old watchmaker meant. An explosion took place in the chemical laboratory which cost Nathaniel's father his life ; his instructor in the fatal art, to which he had fallen a victim, was nowhere to be seen. It followed from these incidents, calculated to make so strong an impression upon a lively imagination, that Nathaniel was haunted through life by the recollections of this horrible personage, and Copelius became in his mind identified with the evil principle.

When introduced to the reader, the young man is studying at the university, where he is suddenly surprised by the appearance of his old enemy, who now personates an Italian or Tyrolese pedlar, dealing in optical glasses and such trinkets, and, although dressed according to his new profession, continuing under the Italianized name of Guiseppe Coppola to be identified with the ancient adversary. Nathaniel is greatly distressed at finding himself unable to persuade either his friend or his mistress of the justice of the horrible apprehensions which he conceives ought to be entertained from the supposed identity of this terrible juris-consult with his double-ganger the dealer in barometers. He is also displeased with Clara, because her clear and sound good sense rejects not only his metaphysical terrors, but also his inflated and affected strain of poetry. His mind gradually becomes alienated from the frank, sensible, and affectionate companion of his childhood, and he grows in the same proportion attached to the daughter of a professor called Spalanzani, whose house is opposite to the windows of his lodging. He has thus an opportunity of frequently remarking Olympia as she sits in her apartment ; and although she remains there for hours without reading, working, or even stirring, he yet becomes enamoured of her extreme beauty in despite of the insipidity of so inactive a person. But much more rapidly does this fatal passion proceed when he is induced to purchase a perspective glass from the pedlar, whose resemblance was so perfect to his old object of detestation. Deceived by the secret influence of the medium of vision, he becomes indifferent to what was visible to all others who approach Olympia,—to a certain stiffness of manner which made her walk as if by the impulse of machinery,—to a paucity of ideas which induced her to express herself only in a few short but reiterated phrases,—in short, to all that indicated Olympia to be what she ultimately proved, a mere literal puppet, or automaton, created by the mechanical skill of Spalanzani, and inspired with an appearance of life by the devilish arts we may suppose of the alchemist, advocate, and weather-glass seller Copelius, alias Coppola.

At this extraordinary and melancholy truth the enamoured Nathaniel arrives by witnessing a dreadful quarrel between the two imitators of Prometheus, while disputing their respective interests in the subject of their creative power. They uttered the wildest imprecations, and tearing the beautiful automaton limb from limb, belaboured each other with the fragments of their clock-work figure. Nathaniel, not much distant from lunacy before, became frantic on witnessing this horrible spectacle.

But we should be mad ourselves were we to trace these ravings any farther. The tale concludes with the moon-struck scholar attempting to murder Clara by precipitating her from a tower. The poor girl being rescued by her brother, the lunatic remains alone on the battlements, gesticulating violently and reciting the gibberish which he had acquired from Copelius and Spalanzani. At this moment, and while the crowd below are devising means to secure the maniac, Copelius suddenly appears among them, assures them that Nathaniel will presently come down of his own accord, and realizes his prophecy by fixing on the latter a look of fascination, the effect of which is instantly to compel the unfortunate young man to cast himself headlong from the battlements.

This wild and absurd story is in some measure redeemed by some traits in the character of Clara, whose firmness, plain good sense, and frank affection are placed in agreeable contrast with the wild imagination, fanciful apprehensions, and extravagant affection of her crazy-pated admirer.

It is impossible to subject tales of this nature to criticism. They are not the visions of a poetical mind, they have scarcely even the seeming authenticity which the hallucinations of lunacy convey to the patient; they are the feverish dreams of a light-headed patient, to which, though they may sometimes excite by their peculiarity, or surprise by their oddity, we never feel disposed to yield more than momentary attention. In fact, the inspirations of Hoffmann so often resemble the ideas produced by the immoderate use of opium, that we cannot help considering his case as one requiring the assistance of medicine rather than of criticism; and while we acknowledge that with a steadier command of his imagination he might have been an author of the first distinction, yet situated as he was, and indulging the diseased state of his own system, he appears to have been subject to that undue vividness of thought and perception of which the celebrated Nicolai became at once the victim and the conqueror. Phlebotomy and cathartics, joined to sound philosophy and deliberate observation, might, as in the case of that celebrated philosopher, have brought to a healthy state a mind which we cannot help regarding as diseased, and his imagination soaring with an equal and steady flight

might have reached the highest pitch of the poetical profession.

The death of this extraordinary person took place in 1822. He became affected with the disabling complaint called *tabes dorsalis*, which gradually deprived him of the power of his limbs. Even in this melancholy condition he dictated several compositions, which indicate the force of his fancy, particularly one fragment entitled "The Recovery," in which are many affecting allusions to the state of his own mental feelings at this period ; and a novel called "The Adversary," on which he had employed himself even shortly before his last moments. Neither was the strength of his courage in any respect abated ; he could endure bodily agony with firmness, though he could not bear the visionary terrors of his own mind. The medical persons made the severe experiment whether by applying the actual cautery to his back by means of glowing iron, the activity of the nervous system might not be restored. He was so far from being cast down by the torture of this medical martyrdom, that he asked a friend who entered the apartment after he had undergone it, whether he did not smell the roasted meat. The same heroic spirit marked his expressions, that "he would be perfectly contented to lose the use of his limbs, if he could but retain the power of working constantly by the help of an amanuensis." Hoffman died at Berlin, upon the 25th June, 1822, leaving the reputation of a remarkable man, whose temperament and health alone prevented his arriving at a great height of reputation, and whose works as they now exist ought to be considered less as models for imitation than as affording a warning how the most fertile fancy may be exhausted by the lavish prodigality of its possessor.

## MASANIELLO.\*

THE "Mémoires du Comte de Modene," and "Le Duc de Guise à Naples" supply us with much curious information concerning a period of singular and agitating interest, when a poor young fisherman succeeded in reducing all Naples under his command, and when, after the fall of this adventurer, as sudden and extraordinary as his rise, a hero, after the most astonishing personal efforts, failed in establishing a new government in the room of that which so mean an agent had been able to overthrow. The story affords a melancholy proof how much revolutionary movements are in the power of the lowest and most ignorant of the people, and how insufficient are courage and talent of the highest order in extinguishing a conflagration which has been kindled by the most trifling accident. The works which serve for our text throw considerable light on each other, and present, with some farther assistance, an interesting view of the stormy epoch at which our readers may remember that the attention of England was withdrawn from events passing in foreign countries, by the convulsions experienced at home during the great civil war.

The Memoirs of the Comte de Modene are the production of a man of rank, attached to the Duke of Guise's person as a gentleman of his chamber; for in the seventeenth century the old feudal custom was yet maintained, according to which, persons of undoubted nobility entered into the families of princes, as they now do into those of sovereigns, without being looked on as derogating from their condition by the sacrifice of their independence. The Count appears to have been a sincere friend to the Duke, but incurred his displeasure from causes which we shall notice in due place; and though he admits his patron's high qualities, he is, in self-justification, severe in reprehending his errors of conduct and faults of temper, so that the work may be considered as a criticism on his romantic enterprise.

\* *Mémoires du Comte de Modene sur la Révolution de Naples de 1647.* Troisième édition. Publiée par J. B. Micille. Paris, 1827. 2 tom. 8vo.

*Le Duc de Guise à Naples, ou Mémoires sur les Révolutions de ce Royaume en 1647 et 1648.* Deuxième édition. Paris, 1828. 8vo.

The other volume of *Memoirs*, published in 1828, is a very lively and spirited narrative of the adventures of Masaniello and the Duke of Guise, written in a pleasing and animated style, and with all the picturesque incidents and accessories which belong more properly to romantic fiction. The circumstances of the country and the peculiar character of the people are touched with great spirit. In a species of composition which takes a more ample scope and verge than the limits of strict history admit, it is allowable to introduce a little embroidery foreign to the subject. The ingenious author,\* in pulling truth out of her well, has put some clothes on her "to come abroad," but one or two trifles reflecting on the Duke of Guise's character he has suffered quietly to drop out of the story. The Comte de Modene is a dissector and anatomist, who lays bare the motives of the adventurous hero, while the author of the anonymous *Memoirs* of 1828 resembles a painter, who, in composing an historical piece, directs his best lights on favourable points, and throws the rest into shade.

In our task of reviewing these works, we have derived considerable advantage from the "*Memoirs, historical, literary, and political, of the Kingdoms of Naples*," by Count Gregory Orloff, Senator of the Emperor of Russia, (5 vols 8vo Paris, 1825,) a very spirited and interesting production, but dedicated to a general view of the kingdom of Naples. Our principal assistance is derived from the Duke of Guise's own *Memoirs*, (reprinted in 1826, in Petitot's *Collection of Memoirs relative to the History of France*,†) which, though they are said to have been retouched by the prince's secretary, Saint-Yon, retain such strong internal marks of authenticity, that we have no doubt that the materials were supplied by the Duke himself. In our extracts we shall make use of an English translation of them, published at London in 1669, which is sufficiently faithful. The French and English of the 17th century run most easily into each other, and besides we thus save some trouble. We have looked at such other authorities as we have at hand, particularly the "*History of the Revolutions of Naples*, by Seigneur Andrew Giraffi, translated by J H Esq" (probably James Howell).

Of these revolutions, that achieved by Masaniello is, from the extraordinary nature and importance of the events, crowded together within the brief space of ten days, most generally known and remembered. As a moral curiosity, however, evincing the struggles of genius and talent with all disadvantages of fortune, the subsequent revolution, directed by the Duke of Guise, is perhaps the more instructive spectacle of the two.

Dryden, in his *Essay on Heroic Plays*, has justified, in the following

\* Said to be M. de Pastoret, son of the Marquis de Pastoret.

† They form the 55th and 56th volumes of the Second Series.



manner, the extravagant and romantic exploits imputed to his fictitious hero, the prototype of Drawcansir : "If the history of the late Duke of Guise be true, he hazarded more and performed not less in Naples, that Almanzor is feigned to have done in Grenada." To this may be added the testimony of the acute and severely-judging philosopher, Bayle, who tells us that "the Duke's life needs few additions from invention to make it resemble a romance : " and in another place he observes, that the obstacles to his entrance into Naples were such, that Calprenede or Scudcri, the voluminous romance writers of the day, have never invented any more worthy of their fictitious heroes.

Doubtless, then, an account of these extraordinary revolutions may supply an appropriate article for the *Foreign Quarterly Review*, more especially acceptable to our English readers, some of whom, in these days of Continental rambling, are perhaps better acquainted with the streets of Naples than with its history. Nor is it amusement alone which may be derived from a true story possessing all the interest of a fictitious narrative, and exhibiting so many strange vicissitudes of fortune, that it might almost pass for a romance, since it affords grounds of deep reflection for those who may be disposed to compare events passed on another stage and terminating in a different manner, with the singular occurrences of the same character which have astounded our own time. An insurgent populace, as we have seen, has in all ages and countries displayed the same aptitude for violence and bloodshed, the same blindness to their own real interests, the same liability to be duped by the dullest and most brutal among themselves :— finally, the mob of an enlightened city like Paris in the 18th century, seems to differ little more from that of Naples in the preceding, sunk as it was in ignorance and superstition, than a philosopher differs from a clown, when they are both in the delirium of the same fever of the brain.

To present this curious picture before the reader's eye in detail, we must "commence with the commencement," which the name and fate of Masaniello have rendered so memorable. Studying brevity as much as possible, but remembering how much of the interest depends on the rapid succession of events, we shall throw the occurrences of each of the ten momentous days of this revolutionary hero's career, into the form of a journal.

The dominion of Naples and Sicily having passed from the imperial house of Hohenstauffen, to the royal family of Anjou, continued in the possession of that family till the middle of the fifteenth century. In 1505, after various changes of masters, into which it is not our business here to enter, the sovereignty of these states devolved by conquest and by treaty upon Ferdinand of Arragon, King of Spain, husband of Queen Isabella, under whom, and whose descendants, for

the next 200 years, they were governed by delegates, bearing the title of Viceroy.

It is seldom that viceroys can exercise their charge with advantage to the country over which they are temporary and delegated sovereigns. The very instability of their power, the necessity of maintaining their interest at the court of their sovereign, and the desire to improve their own fortune, all tend to withdraw them from any attention to the duties of their government beyond what is necessary to keep all quiet, and assure themselves that no explosion shall take place during their brief space of authority. It may well be doubted however whether more active cares and more strenuous exertion in the management of the dependent kingdom, would be the surest road to the favour of their sovereign and his ministers. All measures tending materially to the amelioration of a government must be necessarily slow in their operation. Whatever unpopularity attaches to such innovations at the commencement is the portion of the viceroy who may introduce them, while whatever merit or reward follows their happy issue must belong to his successors in office. A lieutenant or viceroy has as little temptation to venture on such experiments, however confident of the beneficial final result, as a tenant to stock his orchard with walnut plants, which cannot bear fruit till long after his lease has expired. It is well, however, when a viceroy is contented to be merely passive in his high office, and negatively a clog on the improvement of the state. But the situation being frequently given to some nobleman of high pretensions, embarrassed by debts, and overwhelmed by a large family or connections meriting his assistance, it too often happens that he considers the province over which he presides less as a country to be fostered and rendered happy under his charge, than as a mine from which he is to extract for himself and his dependants within the shortest possible space (for how can he reckon on the length of opportunity to be afforded him?) the greatest possible quantity of wealth. Revenue also is the usual demand from the court of the sovereign; the remittance of large sums forms the best mode of upholding the interest of the viceroy at home, so that he is at once instigated by avarice and ambition to extort from the unfortunate people committed to his care, and that by imposts of the most oppressive kind, whatever former governors may have left them of wealth or tangible property. If we add that the viceroy is a native probably of the mother, or rather the step-mother country, a favourite of the King or Minister, and at any rate occupied for the advantage of the former as well as his own, it may easily be foreseen that the complaints of the oppressed people will not, without the utmost difficulty, find their way to the royal ear, and when they do reach it, are likely to be treated with contempt or displeasure, as mutinous or calumnious.

In the long list of viceroys of Naples who had held the office during the century and a half which the Spanish dominion had then lasted, we are afraid that the characteristics of by far the greater number were such as we have here given. The picture given by Giannone of the state to which this beautiful kingdom was reduced at the period we are speaking of, is equally striking and impressive. "In the kingdom of Naples," says that historian, "the flames of Vesuvius were not so numerous as the internal fires by which the state was consumed. In this kingdom the Spaniards had placed their principal means of defence, because its wealth and fertility were such as to supply both men and money to every other province when attacked. Its fertility and opulence might have always supplied needful demands, if the incessantly craving rapacity of the Spanish ministers had not totally exhausted and robbed it even of its natural riches : but as in Spain that viceroy was most esteemed who contrived to extract most money, there was no machine which was not had recourse to in order to obtain the consent of the nobility and people, which was necessary, to impose the taxes, and to extort the largest possible sum of money from them. As these were sold to the highest bidder, the burden was thus perpetuated, and the system of extortion aggravated ; for the purchasers being foreigners, principally Genoese, greedy only of gain, there was no sort of vexation and cruelty which, reckless of the miseries of the wretched populace, they did not practise. Nothing more remained to be taxed, and the necessity still increased." *Istoria di Napoli*, lib. xxxvii. cap. 2.

The expensive wars of Philip II. in the Netherlands had occasioned such heavy debts and disbursements, that his indolent son Philip III., and his grandson Philip IV., both of whom exhibited the same nullity of character, saw no other resource but in authorizing, or, to speak more properly, permitting, the most oppressive exactions on the people of their wide-spread dominions. Besides drawing imposts, direct and indirect, to an extent almost incredible, the viceroys of Naples had exacted what were called *donatives* or *free gifts*, equivalent to the *benevolences* of the English royal revenue, and equally free as the latter were benevolent. The amount of those free gifts, from the time of Ferdinand the Catholic to that of Philip IV., was no less than forty-six thousand millions of ducats, in addition to the regular revenues.

The happy climate and rich soil of this enchanted country were such as to afford almost unlimited scope for this rapacity on the part of the Spanish government and its viceroys. The people subsist without murmuring on what the earth produces, almost spontaneously ; and even their dress, in so mild a climate, is so simple as scarcely to be counted an article of expense, while many never look nor wish for any other habitation than cellars or the most wretched huts. In other respects the land was wealthy, and the commerce of the city consider-

able, and there was perhaps no place in the world, from the revenues of which so little was subtracted for the actual support of the lower classes, who lived in a state of contented indifference to many of the sensual enjoyments which are in poorer countries indispensable to comfort. The Spaniards were aware of this, and also of the happy and good-humoured turn of the populace, who, light and gay-hearted, are as easily amused with showy processions, festivals, popular music, and such trifles, as they are cheaply satisfied with food and raiment; and, while in their ordinary state of mind, are as tractable under a bad or indifferent government, as they are contented with the slightest shelter against the elements. But the temper of the Neapolitans strongly resembles that of their climate, which in general fair, serene, and delicious, profuse of fruits and flowers, is nevertheless subject to sudden convulsions of the hurricane, the earthquake, and the volcano. The exterior, however, retains its wonted serenity of appearance until the moment of explosion, and no visible signs, physical or moral, warn those who are concerned to fly from its terrors.

Rodriguez Pons de Leon, Duke of Arcos, succeeded Don Juan Alphonso Henriquez, Admiral of Castile, as Viceroy of Naples, early in 1646. There was a war at that time raging betwixt France and Spain. The former kingdom was under the administration of the celebrated Cardinal Mazarin, who followed with unequal steps the policy of his great predecessor Richelieu, in endeavouring to diminish the power of the House of Austria, and for that purpose supported the Catalonian insurgents in a civil war against Philip IV. While the Admiral of Castile was Viceroy of Naples, he had been urged to send troops and money to support his master in the insurgent province, consequently he convoked the parliament of Naples, from whose bounty he requested a free gift to meet the necessities of the ruling government. Upon being assured by this assembly that the resources of the city were entirely exhausted, and the people reduced to the last extremity of distress, the viceroy withdrew his demand. This compliance with the popular voice was represented at the Court of Spain as a dereliction of his duty to the Crown. The Admiral received peremptory orders to persist in his demand, and being of a noble and humane disposition, he preferred the resignation of his office to becoming the agent of oppression.

The successor of this just and high-spirited nobleman was a man of very different stamp. The Duke of Arcos was haughty, sullen, and resolute in right or wrong, vindictive in his temper, but capable of concealing his resentment, and of postponing revenge till it could be taken safely. These are national faults, but the Duke of Arcos was also subtle and treacherous—attributes which are held alien to the Spaniard's proud but generous character.

Scarcely was the new viceroy arrived in Naples when he saw himself in a manner forced on those harsh and unpopular courses, to avoid which his predecessor had retired from office. France had sent a fleet into the Mediterranean to disturb the Spanish possessions in Italy, especially to endeavour to take advantage of the discontents in Naples, and again to organize, if possible, the French or Anjou faction, once so powerful in that kingdom. Against this expedition the Duke of Arcos equipped an armament, which was successful in frustrating the proposed disembarkation, and in beating off the French squadron.

To meet the expenses of this armament, and of keeping up a force to guard against the attacks of the French, who had possessed themselves of the strongholds of Tuscany, the viceroy had recourse to the parliament, which voted an *extraordinary gift* of a million of ducats, leaving it to him to devise the tax by which that sum was to be raised. The practice of that day was to borrow the amount of such gift of some capitalist, to whom a branch of the public revenue was mortgaged for the interest and repayment of the loan, and who generally derived an exorbitant profit from the transaction. In this case the lender and the million were soon found, but it was not so easy to devise an impost for the purpose of repaying it, as every existing branch of revenue was already similarly engaged. It was proposed by Andrea Nauclerio, the *eletto del popolo*, (a sort of provost of the merchants,) to lay a tax of a carlin per pound on all the fruit and vegetables that were brought to market, and which, in point of fact, formed the principal articles of food to the temperate Neapolitans. This proposition, after some objections, was finally adopted, and the edict, imposing it, was issued on the 3rd of January, 1647. On several former occasions this very tax had been had recourse to, but it was almost always taken off immediately, from the experience of its odious and oppressive nature. The edict was no sooner published, than there arose a deep murmuring among the people, made desperate through the oppressive character of a regulation affecting their daily food, and calculated to abridge them of that, which men out of providence, if not from humanity, give to their very labouring cattle—sufficiency of natural aliment. From murmurs they proceeded to threats and violence; every time the viceroy went abroad, his coach was surrounded by crowds, loudly calling out for the abolition of the tax; numerous placards were exhibited denouncing its oppressive character, and one night the booth in the market-place, where the duty was collected, was burnt down. The symptoms of an approaching insurrection became so alarming, that various councils were held by the viceroy, in order to devise some other tax of a less grievous nature; but such was either the want of credit in the government, or of skill in its financial advisers, that no feasible substitute was either suggested or adopted, and the tax on fruit continued to be levied.

The discontent and clamours of the people became in consequence every day greater and greater, and there were not wanting instigators who added fuel to the flame, and urged that the opportunity was at last arrived to throw off the yoke of their Spanish oppressors. Among these, two priests, Julio Genuino and F. Savino, a pettifogging attorney, Cieco d'Arpaya, and a gunsmith, Gennaro Annese, made themselves very conspicuous. On the 12th of May the Admiral's galley, the chief of the Spanish flotilla then lying in the harbour, with 300,000 ducats on board, took fire and blew up, with the strongest appearance that the disaster arose from treachery. The popular discontent became at last so threatening, that the viceroy considered it safe, at the risk of still farther increasing it, to forbid the annual procession, in honour of St. John the Baptist, on the 24th of June, lest the concourse should lead to open insurrection.

Among the populace at this time was a young fisherman, who observed and shared deeply the general discontent. His anger and resentment had been roused by the rough treatment which his wife had experienced from the tax-collectors, who, detecting her in the act of concealing a small bag of flour in order to evade the payment of the duty, had put her in prison. Her husband paid a fine in order to obtain her release, but swore vengeance upon the oppressors, and was not long in finding the opportunity of fulfilling his vow. This man's name was Tommaso Aniello,\* of Amalfi, commonly called MASANIELLO, for whom fate had destined such rapid change of condition as never mortal underwent within the same space of time. He was of middle stature and handsome countenance, with lively dark eyes, short, curly hair, a frank and bold address, noted among his companions for smartness and activity, and about twenty-four years of age. He wore a fisherman's blue jacket with white linen trowsers, a sailor's red woollen cap on his head, and was barelegged and barefooted.

Matters had arrived at this pass, and preparations were making by the populace for the celebration of one of their great festivals, that of Our Lady of Carmel, which takes place in the middle of July. One of the amusements, in which the people took the greatest delight on that occasion, was the mock siege of a wooden fortress of considerable elevation, erected on the site of the ancient castle, which was defended by

\* The author of *Le Duc de Guise à Naples* mentions, that in an insurrection which broke out at Naples exactly a century before this, (in 1547,) on account of the Spanish government wishing to introduce the Inquisition into that kingdom, another Masaniello, a fisherman, had headed the insurgent fishermen and lazzaroni. On this point we find the following remark in a curious volume published recently, *Mélanges d'une petite bibliothèque, par Charles Nodier*, p. 361. "When the revolution of 1647 broke out at Naples, a unanimous tradition attested that liberty had been on the point of being conquered a century before by another Tommaso Aniello, of Amalfi, and that this man had died predicting to his countrymen that they would be delivered at the end of another century by one of his descendants."

fishermen, disguised as Turks, against the attacks of the lazzaroni in their ordinary attire. The better to enable them to perform their part, both parties were accustomed to assemble on the three Sundays immediately previous to the festival, forming themselves into companies, carrying small canes, marching about, preceded by a standard, and making a display of their newly-acquired discipline. Our journal now commences.

*July 7th.*—This being the second Sunday before the festival, there was an unusually early assemblage of boys and young people, who were to be actors in it, headed by Masaniello, who had been chosen the leader of the besieging party; being market-day, there was also a large concourse of peasants and gardeners from the surrounding country, and the supply of fruit and vegetables was so abundant that purchasers could not be found for it. The tax-collectors insisting upon receiving the duty for all, whether sold or not, a dispute arose whether it was to be paid by the countrymen or the retail dealers; the dispute was referred to Nauclerio, the *eletto del popolo*, who decided that it must fall upon the person who brought the fruit to market. One of the persons aggrieved by this decision happened to be a peasant from Pozzuoli, and a brother-in-law of Masaniello. Indignant at the decision, he took the basket of figs, which had given occasion to the dispute, and throwing it down, scattered its contents about, at the same time exclaiming, "This belongs to me, I give it to you, my friends;—our tyrants shall have none of this at least." "Let them have some of it!" said Masaniello, who stood by his side, and snatching up a bunch of figs, struck Nauclerio over the face with it. His example was instantly followed by his numerous companions. Masaniello then addressing them in bold and ready eloquence, such as the occasion demanded, conjured them to stand by him, promising in the most decided terms redress for the grievances of which they had to complain. They then commenced acts of violence, broke down and destroyed the booths of the tax-collectors, burst into the houses of such as were conceived to have enriched themselves by farming the imposts, and spread alarm through the whole city. Their numbers had by this time increased to many thousands, armed with weapons which they had taken from gunsmiths' shops, and wherever they could find them. They compelled the Prince of Bisignano, a Neapolitan nobleman, to go with them and act as their chief; but being shocked at their excesses, and alarmed for the consequences, he contrived to make his escape. Contrary, however, to the custom of ordinary rioters, the insurgents took no spoils for their own use. Mutinies and riots often commence with scruples on the part of the actors to profit by pillage, but it is seldom that these vehement patriots do not finally give way to temptation. They next proceeded to the viceroy's palace, forced their way into his pre-

sence, despite of his guards, and peremptorily demanded the abolition not only of the new gabelle on fruits, but of all other 'imposts whatsoever, demands which, under the immediate influence of terror, the viceroy assented to. They then destroyed the most valuable effects in the palace; the viceroy himself, endeavouring to escape from the insurgents by throwing himself into a coach, was discovered, abused, and grossly insulted; and it was with the utmost difficulty that he succeeded, by throwing money among them, in effecting his retreat into the Castello Nuovo. The populace then, by unanimous consent, placed themselves under the command of Masaniello, who was installed "Captain-General of the most faithful people of Naples," and such coadjutors and counsellors were added (chiefly of low rank and infamous character) as appeared to him best qualified to assist him. He used little counsel however, and while he sat by a chafing-dish of fire, by which he spent the night, at the Tower of the Carmelites, which he had made his headquarters, his advisers could only draw from him these words: "I feel a weight like boiling lead in my head, but the Virgin and Saints appear to me every night, and promise me their protection. I have assured the people that I will give them freedom, and they shall be free." By his directions the prisons were broke open, and the captives set at liberty; the few inhabitants who resisted were put to death; and one house, where there chanced to be a quantity of gunpowder, was blown up, an accident which cost eighty-seven persons their lives.

*July 8th.*—The people having once tasted the pleasures of license, prepared with tenfold force to repeat their riot. In the mean time the Duke of Arcos was taken absolutely unprovided. He had indeed about three thousand soldiers, most of them Germans and Spaniards. But though he garrisoned the three castles, Nuovo, dell' Uovo, and Saint Elmo, the citadels of Naples, cutting them off by hasty fortifications and entrenchments from the city, the number of troops was scarcely sufficient to protect these important strongholds, and such out-posts as were essentially necessary to their defence. A German regiment of five hundred men was defeated and disarmed in an attempt to enter the city. The provincial militia were even more easily repulsed, and many joined the insurgents. Thus it became almost evident that the city, and ultimately the kingdom of Naples, were lost to Spain, in case the nobility and gentry of the city should unite with the populace against the government. There were no doubt deadly feuds of old standing betwixt the two orders, and Arcos, though secretly as hostile to the nobles as to the people, resolved to make use of the former in negotiating a truce with the latter, in order to effect a general pacification, and prevent the ominous conjunction of their forces. He employed in this perilous negotiation a Neapolitan nobleman, the Duke of Matalone, whom he held at that time a pri-



soner in the Castle Nuovo, and who was easily prevailed on, by flattery and promises, to forget for the moment his own injuries, and undertake the part of mediator between the Spanish viceroys and the insurgents. Successful and unopposed, the multitude now raised their demands. They required not only the abolition of all the imposts, but the restoration of all privileges granted by Ferdinand the Catholic, and his successor, Charles V., to the citizens of Naples; in particular, with a view of becoming acquainted with the full extent of these immunities, they demanded the production of a charter, written, as they said, in letters of gold, and granted by Charles V. to the city of Naples. Whatever were the viceroy's motives, whether he had no such deed, or did not choose to deliver it, he acted equally foolishly and criminally in endeavouring to palm on the populace some other document in place of that which they required. As for his unfortunate envoy, the Duke of Matalone, they seized on his person, loaded him with insults, and dragged him to prison. In the mean time they followed their course of burning and destroying the houses of all whom they regarded as enemies of the people, and inspired such general terror, that hodies of a hundred men fled at the approach of one of Masaniello's lazzaroni, although they were merely ragged lads, armed with long poles headed with iron hooks, usually employed for steering their boats, but now wielded for the purpose of pulling the gentlemen (as they said) from their horses. The very women took arms and formed themselves into companies, marching through the streets with muskets on their shoulders, swords by their sides, and poignards in their bosoms. Others brought their children in their arms, and made them cast burning brands into the houses of the Duke of Matalone and other nobles, whom they now considered their enemies as much as the Spaniards. "These lambs," they cried, "shall take vengeance for the loss of the bread they have been deprived of by traitors!"

*July 9th.*—The insurrection was equally progressive and increasing. The insurgents, after overcoming the efforts of a company of soldiers, placed for the protection of that important post, possessed themselves of the steeple and church of St. Lorenzo, which commanded the city. Masaniello and his successors in his stormy exaltation as chief of the people, made use of the great bell of that church as a tocsin or alarm bell, and the Duke of Arcos was wont to say, long after, that he never heard it toll without thinking of the judgment peal. Cardinal Filomarino, Archbishop of Naples, was now employed, instead of the Duke of Matalone, to negotiate with Masaniello and the people. He was a subtle and sagacious churchman; popular with the citizens, from having occasionally taken their side against the Spanish government, to which he was not supposed to be partial, though willing to contribute the weight of his character

and influence to effect a pacification in this dreadful emergency. After much cavilling, he convinced the people and their leader that he had sufficient powers from the viceroy to assent to all their demands, and that the papers which he exhibited, and to which the viceroy expressed himself willing to conform, were the authentic charters of Ferdinand and Charles V.

*July 10th.*—Masaniello had appointed a general rendezvous of the people to be held in the Piazza del Popolo, to hear the terms proposed by the cardinal. But events took place which gave a different turn to affairs. Various parties of banditti, long the dishonour and plague of Naples, seeking naturally to find their own advantage amid rapine and slaughter, now made their appearance. They were welcomed as friends of the people, and one of them, named Perrone, a particular confidant of Masaniello, was entrusted with the care of the prisoners who had been arrested. The Duke of Matalone being under this person's charge, (of whom he had formerly some knowledge,) found little difficulty in engaging him, and another chief of banditti, named Pepé Palombe, by a promise of twelve thousand ducats, in an attempt to end the insurrection by assassinating Masaniello. At the same time the imprisoned duke was allowed to escape from custody. An immense throng of citizens crowded the square where the assembly was held, when five hundred banditti assembled among them, completely armed and well mounted. Their appearance in such numbers excited suspicion, and Masaniello required them to dismount and divide themselves; instead of this order being obeyed, seven arquebuses were fired at the *Capo del Popolo*, so near that they burned his shirt, though not a ball touched him! The populace instantly discharged a volley of musketry on the troop of banditti, and killed thirty of them; the rest fled into a neighbouring church, which, notwithstanding the respect usually paid in Catholic countries to such an asylum, proved no place of refuge. The gates were unhinged, the vaults resounded to the fire of musketry, while the people slew the wretches at the very altar, flooding the church pavement with gore. Such of the banditti as were examined and executed confessed the existence of the plot to assassinate Masaniello, after which they hoped to disperse the insurgents, by assaulting them at unawares, while astonished at the loss of their captain. Other reports were added,—namely, that mines were formed below the Piazza del Popolo,—where the insurgents were to meet,—though, in truth, the conspirators had neither time nor means for such a gunpowder plot. All agreed, however, in naming the Duke of Matalone, and his brother, Don Joseph Caraffa, as the instigators of the conspiracy, who were immediately sought after with the most vigorous alacrity. Masaniello, meantime, remained in the great square, surrounded by the heads of the slain banditti, planted

upon pikes, exaggerating the dangers which he had encountered, and calling for vengeance on the aristocracy. The Duke of Matalone had the good fortune to make his escape, but his brother, Don Joseph Caraffa, fell into the hands of the people, who were dragging him before Masaniello, when a butcher, called Michael de Santis, struck off his head with a cleaver. His miserable remains were brought to the insurgent chief, who struck and spurned the senseless body, which was afterwards gibbeted in the market-place. Masaniello's rage against the banditti was so great that he ordered that no person, even ladies of condition, or priests of the highest orders, should dare to wear long garments in the streets of Naples. Even cardinals and prelates were obliged to go in such succinct dress, as to warrant that they were not banditti in disguise carrying arms under their robes. The nobles and aristocrats were compelled to surrender their arms to the popular officers, and with admirable consistency, an excise on all eatables brought to market was imposed, for the maintenance of that revolutionary government which had its origin in the abolition of the gabelles.

The scene is well described, and without exaggeration, by the author of "*Le Duc de Guise à Naples.*"

"Horrid outcries rent the air; bleeding carcasses were tied to horses' tails, and, attended by fishermen and sailors, were dragged through the streets; children, covered with blood, ran behind, followed by women and lazzaroni, carrying the royal banners, and firing muskets into the windows. In the market-place was a wooden scaffold hastily constructed, and inclosed by a circular range of pikes, on which the insurgents fixed the heads of their victims, while their mangled bodies laid below, bound with ropes to the palisade. Masaniello ascends the scaffold, still dressed as a sailor, with sword in hand, his eyes staring, and foaming at the mouth; '*Bring the head of the traitor!*' he exclaims, and then insults the remains of Joseph Caraffa; he speaks to him in mockery, he touches his hair and ghastly lips, while the multitude raise the most ferocious acclamations. In all quarters victims are sought after; even the old and helpless are not spared, and their bodies are dragged about; the squares are covered with carnage, the streets resound with cries of affright, the palaces are in flames. The churches, however, are open; the altars are invested with the ornaments of the festivals for the dead; and before the Most High, priests and prelates call for peace, bewail the victims, and pray for the guilty. In passing by the churches, the ruffian, who has just committed murder, or the incendiary, who still brandishes his flaming torch, uncovers his head, kneels for a moment, and each returns to his work of destruction.

*July 11th.*—In the mean time, the accommodation proposed by the

viceroy, through the mediation of the Cardinal Filomarino, though somewhat checked by Perrone's conspiracy, was still proceeding. The truth is, that whether the conspiracy succeeded or failed, the Spaniards were the party sure to benefit by it. Had Perrone effected his object, they would have been rid of Masaniello ; and although he had failed, the death of Don Joseph Caraffa, with other consequences, had removed all possibility of a reconciliation between the nobles and the people, of which the viceroy was so justly apprehensive. Assisted by the two persons we have already mentioned, Genuino and Arpayà, who had been formerly employed in political business, Masaniello had a set of articles drawn up, in which the gabelles were abolished, all former privileges renewed and confirmed, and the actors in the late tumults, including himself and his counsellors by name, assured of pardon. These articles were read publicly in the church of our Lady of the Carmelites, after which the Cardinal Filomarino passed in procession to the Castello Nuovo, followed by the whole tide of the population, amid loud acclamations. On this occasion Masaniello, at the cardinal's suggestions, exchanged his mariner's habit, which he had rendered more awful than imperial robes of Tyrian purple, for a splendid suit of cloth of silver, and mounted on a fine charger, proceeded to pay his respects to the viceroy, who received him with the utmost respect, and had an opportunity to see the wonderful and alarming influence which this fisherman had attained over the populace. Vast numbers of the insurgents had crowded in after the procession, and filled the castle yard. Alarmed at the length of Masaniello's stay, they began to show symptoms of uneasiness. The *Capo del Popolo* was then with the cardinal and viceroy in the cabinet of the latter, when stepping to the window he silenced them by a word of his mouth and a signal of his hand. At another signal, all the bells of the city were tolled ; at a third, the deafening peal was silenced. He waved his hand, and the people shouted ; he placed his finger on his lips, and the roaring multitude became hushed as death. Finally, he commanded them to disperse to their homes, and the court-yard, as if by magic, was evacuated in an instant. The viceroy and his courtiers looked at each other with astonishment. It was no wonder that the viceroy felt it necessary to recognize the authority of captain-general of the people in a demagogue possessing such complete influence over his constituents. The Duke of Arcos went so far as to put a gold chain round his neck, and to salute him by the title of Duke of St. George. So closed the fifth day, the events of which augured a restoration of public tranquillity.

*July 12th.*—The events of this day proved, however, that peace was yet far distant. Masaniello, agitated perhaps by apprehensions of the banditti, no longer received petitions and applications in the open

market-place, but at a window of his own cottage, which was close by it, where he stood in his fisherman's dress, with a loaded blunderbuss in his hand, which put the suitors in some terror for the reply which they might possibly receive. His house was surrounded by numerous guards, and on this occasion he exhibited himself—

—as a man busied about decrees,  
Condemning some to death and some to exile ;  
Ransoming one, or pitying ; threatening the other."

The petitions which were presented to him, he himself being unable to read or write, were examined and answered by masked secretaries, who wrote the necessary reply, which the *Capo del Popolo* attested by a mark. His sentences, his executions, his burning and pillaging, still indicated his being thoroughly imbued with that implacable hatred to the aristocracy, proper to a man of the lowest class.

*July 13th.*—A solemn ceremony was appointed to take place in the cathedral, where Masaniello presented himself before the viceroy, the cardinal archbishop, and the whole of the constituted authorities of the kingdom, holding a drawn sword in one hand, and the charter of Charles V. in the other. Here, after religious service, the Duke of Arcos took a solemn oath to observe the articles stipulated betwixt him and the *Capo del Popolo* on the part of the people of Naples. In the course of this ceremony, Masaniello, for the first time, showed marks of deranged intellect. In discussing the different articles of the capitulation he made freakish and absurd interruptions, and at the conclusion of the solemnity was with difficulty—almost perforce—prevented from stripping himself of his ceremonial dress, in order to resume his mariner's rags, in presence of the viceroy, the cardinal, and the whole assembly. The viceroy, on returning from the ceremony, seeing the wife of Masaniello at a window, saluted her with the greatest respect.

*July 14th.*—This day, being Sunday, the eighth of the insurrection, the conduct of Masaniello became still more capricious and fantastic than on the preceding,—attracted general notice, and began to diminish the respect paid to him even by the ignorant multitude. In the morning he resumed the exercise of his judicial functions ; afterwards gave orders for the surrender of the principal posts to the Spanish troops, and at the moment the popular chiefs were attending him in council, rushed out suddenly, half undressed, mounted his horse, and galloped off to invite the cardinal to sup with him at Pausilippo. The cardinal, not daring to refuse, excused himself from accompanying him immediately, on account of his spiritual duties, and promised to join him in the afternoon. Masaniello then proceeded to the viceroy's residence, and invited him also to be of the party ; the Duke of Arcos con-

trived to excuse himself, but gave orders that his barge should convey the *Capo del Popolo* to the foot of Pausilippo. On his way to the barge, he committed all sorts of extravagances, and on his arrival at Pausilippo, he went into the church to hear mass; after which he threw himself into the sea, swimming about with his clothes on, and an hour afterwards ordered supper. It was supposed that Masaniello at this time had been poisoned with some liquor having the power of creating lunacy. We believe the art of medicine knows no such drug as would destroy the mind, leaving the body uninjured, though there is no want of liquors by which a temporary suspension of the faculties may be produced. To these also Masaniello applied himself, having drank twelve tumblers or flasks of the wine called *Lachryma Christi*, a dose which could not tend to calm his frenzy. He was carried home, and, for the first time probably since his exaltation, slept soundly.

*July 15th.*—The ninth day of the insurrection exhibited fresh proofs of Masaniello's frenzy, and every class of persons began to be equally tired of its consequences, which were sometimes ludicrous, sometimes fatal. The people of every condition, and even many of the popular chiefs, headed by Genuino and Arpayà, expressed an earnest desire to be rid, by whatever means, of their own beloved *Capo del Popolo*. With this view a new conspiracy was formed to assassinate him, as one whom friends and foes were alike desirous to be rid of. During the day, he kept his absolute authority in complete exercise. He drew his sword and cut furiously round him,—became, in short, so outrageously mad that his attendants and friends were forced to bind and secure him for the night.

It is probable that the mind of this demagogue had always the strong tendency to insanity, which is so frequently visible in men capable of bold and daring actions, and indeed, where license is given to the passions, in men of genius of every description. In his rapid rise to despotic authority Masaniello was like the boy who ascends a precipice step by step, but becomes giddy and terrified when, unsupported and alone, he looks around him from the summit. For the indulgence of vanity, that fruitful source of madness in various shapes, no one indeed could have so much cause as a poor fisherman, whom a week of tumult had raised to be the companion and controller of princes. The possession of arbitrary power has deranged many, and being so suddenly acquired as it had been in this instance, it must undoubtedly have had a deleterious effect. Masaniello's rapid and stupendous elevation was the most unlooked-for occurrence of the kind which had perhaps ever been witnessed. Personal apprehension, which almost always accompanies, and sometimes is sufficient of itself to cause insanity, was inseparable from the situation of Masaniello,—possessed, as he must have felt himself,

of a "power too great to keep or to resign." His extravagant fears of the banditti, and of the nobles by whom he believed them to be instigated, is one proof of his feverish alarm ; it is another that he would take no food from any other hand than that of a relation called Pizzacarolo ; while he often expressed his belief, that within a week after he had resigned his authority he would be slain, and his body dragged through the streets. Lastly, want of sleep is at once a cause and a symptom of madness, and Masaniello for several nights was, notwithstanding the fatigues of the day, visited with *insomnium*. He had scarcely laid him down in bed when he would start out of it, exclaiming "Up, up, there is no sleeping for us till we are masters of Naples !" It is needless surely to seek farther for causes of Masaniello's insanity. No "Colchick drugs" can be more potent to create and promote frenzy than vanity, the consciousness of arbitrary power, the uncertainty how to proceed in circumstances altogether new and peculiarly arduous, the pressing apprehension of conspiracy and death, the constant and strained exertion of mind, the effects of increasing daily toil, and the privation of nocturnal repose.

*July 16th.*—Upon the tenth and last day of his singular career, Masaniello, escaping from his best friends, (those who detained him in custody as a lunatic), rushed into the church of del Carmine, the day being the festival of the Virgin patroness. The cardinal Filomarino performed the service, and after its conclusion, Masaniello, in a desponding mood, harangued the people with a crucifix in his hand ; complained of being forsaken by them, mingling expressions which were of a pathetic description with such as were utterly irrational and ridiculous. He behaved with such indecorum of speech and gesture, that the priests were obliged to withdraw him from the pulpit by force. To the cardinal he next had recourse, expressing his purpose to resign all his power to the viceroy. The prelate with difficulty prevailed on him to enter the adjoining cloister, and cease interrupting the prayers of the congregation. While the unfortunate man was yet in the cloister, the assassins, few in number, but followed by many others who favoured them, burst into his place of refuge, exclaiming, "Long live the King of Spain, and death to Masaniello !"—"Do ye seek me, my people?" answered Masaniello. "Here I am !" As he turned round he received the fire of four arquebuses, which killed him on the spot, giving him but time to exclaim,—“Oh ye ungrateful traitors !" So low was his popularity fallen, that the thousands, then assembled in the church of del Carmine, heard without the least emotion, that Masaniello was slain. Thereafter his head was carried to the viceroy, and his body, after being dragged through the streets by a rabble of boys, among whom the nobility threw pieces of money, was at length tossed into the city-ditches.

But the flame which Masaniello had kindled was not extinguished by his death. Even in the morning which succeeded his exit, some of the striplings, who had constituted the guard and lictors of their murdered captain-general, sought out his dishonoured remains, and carried them to the cathedral. The mangled corpse was arrayed in royal robes decorated with a crown and sceptre, and after being carried in funeral possession, followed by thousands of armed men, it was at length solemnly interred in the church, with many tears, prayers, and lamentations.

Thus ended the short but eventful life of Masaniello, who, in the course of ten days, rose from the most humble situation to an unrivalled height of despotic authority; and after reigning like a monarch, was, by common consent, shot and dragged through the city like a mad dog, yet finally buried like a prince, and almost worshipped as a saint. It is worth while to look somewhat more closely at a character subjected in so short a space of time to such extraordinary vicissitudes.

There are two classes of persons, both remarkable for the parts they have performed in life, who must yet be carefully distinguished from each other. The first consists of the men of commanding genius and strong character, who may be considered as arbiters of their own destinies, and those of others. They possess force of mind and power of judgment, if not altogether to direct, at least to influence and control their fellow-men. The second class consists of mere creatures of circumstances, which elevate or depress them as the tide of events chances to ebb or flow. The first resemble the experienced mariner, who can manage to steer his course even by means of gales which seem the most adverse; the second may be compared to an unskilful landsman, who drifts at the mercy of wind and wave. There can be little hesitation in affirming that Masaniello belongs to the second class, and that his extraordinary rise was rather the work of fortune and contingency, than of his own device in the conception, or his own exertions in the execution.

As this opinion has been disputed, it is proper to mention our reasons for entertaining it. We conceive that whatever task is undertaken upon premeditation by a man of talents must exhibit in its progress some marks of a regular purpose and plan. Of this we can see no traces in the commotion effected by Masaniello. The fact is, he appears to have had no plan or principle whatever, except the very obvious idea that the imposts were unpopular and disagreeable, and therefore desirable to be got rid of. This was what he called freedom, and it is indeed the most popular and most tangible notion of freedom among the lower orders in all countries. "Independence," said a South American to Captain Basil Hall, "consists in getting a shirt cheaper by nine-tenths than we used to do." When Masaniello proposed to restore



his country's freedom, all he meant was a removal of the imposts, and the vagueness of his ideas upon the topic is best understood from what he said concerning the apparitions of saints and angels, and the scalding lead in his brain. This hatred of taxation was probably the feeling of all men of his class in Naples, and he being an active, bold, and probably half-mad fellow, spoke out loudly what every one thought. But he entertained no purpose whatsoever of freeing his country from the Spanish yoke. On the contrary, he professed the deepest devotion to Philip IV., never named him but with signs of respect, and paid almost superstitious honours to his portrait. And when one of his advisers suggested the alternative of calling in the French to back their insurrection, he threatened if he heard a word more on the subject to bring him to trial as a rebel. He was no less unable to form a scheme which might give the Neapolitans, by union and cordiality amongst themselves, the means of opposing a bulwark to the oppression of their Spanish masters. Above all, Masaniello was totally destitute of that knowledge of mankind so essential to a truly great leader, which enables him to select counsellors and assistants suitable to the times and the purposes in which he is engaged. Julio Genuino was a subaltern political agent, grown old in paltry intrigues, in which he had so conducted himself as to be branded and condemned to the galleys. By Masaniello's influence he was chosen the *Eletto del Popolo*. Cieco d'Arpaya was that most degraded of beings, a paltry retainer of the law, conversant in the tricks and subtleties of his profession, but incapable of receiving or comprehending its nobler lessons. He also had been a galley-slave at Oran, yet was, on the selection of the *Capo del Popolo*, recommended to be chosen counsellor of the insurgents. Such were his civil auxiliaries! His military assistants were as unhappily chosen. Dominico Perrone had been a thief-taker, a profession which he exchanged for that of a captain of banditti. He became Masaniello's lieutenant. Gennaro Annese, of whom we shall have more to say hereafter, was a common gunsmith, an ignorant and brutal mechanic, cruel, avaricious, and cowardly; yet one of the most important quarters of the city was entrusted to his charge. All these four men were faithless to Masaniello; and though Perrone failed in his attempt to assassinate him, the other three were accomplices in his actual slaughter. Of his other adherents, whom he distinguished by appointments, not one seems to have been recommended by character, probity, or talents.

It would be doing Masaniello injustice, however, if we did not add, that having no distinct prospect of rendering essential service to his country, he was at the same time totally free from any sinister views of personal aggrandizement. He appears to have been sincere in his wishes, that when he had set Naples free,—by which he under-

stood the abolition of imposts,—the government of it should be committed to a popular management, composed of such men as we have mentioned. The *Memoirs* of 1828 record a singular circumstance with regard to this point, on the authority of De Santis. While, on Friday, July 12th, the sixth day of the insurrection, he was sitting in his judgment-seat, a female masked, or man in woman's habit, approached and whispered, "Masaniello, we have reached the goal, a crown is prepared, and it is for thy brows."—"For mine?" he replied, "I desire none but the green wreath with which we honour Our Lady's festival in September. When I have delivered my country I shall resume my nets."—"You will find them no more. Rebellion should not be undertaken, or it should be carried on to the end."—"I will resume my nets," said Masaniello steadily. "You will not find them," said the intrusive monitor. "What, then, shall I find?"—"Death!" answered the masked figure, and withdrew into the crowd. An evidence of the purity of his intentions, though combined with gross ignorance, was afforded by the rigour with which he insisted on the destruction of the treasure and rich moveables found in the houses which were destroyed during the first days of the tumult. Latterly, indeed, he yielded to the suggestions of Genuino and d'Arpaya, that these things should be preserved for the good of the state, and for the purpose of presenting them as a donative to Philip IV. in place of the abolished gabelles. But whatever was the case with regard to less scrupulous insurgents, he participated in no plunder, until vanity produced madness, or madness vanity. On the whole we may conclude, that he was a man whose principal characteristic was the boldness with which he pursued an object ardently desired, but who was alike incapable, from want of knowledge and talents, to avail himself of the success which so wonderfully crowned his enterprise. How far his cruelty was the effect of natural disposition, or a consequence of his malady, is a question that must be left to HIM to whom alone it can be known.

Masaniello had not been dead four days when new disturbances broke out betwixt the populace of Naples and the Duke of Arcos. They discovered that in the agreement made betwixt them and the viceroy, the Duke had privately excepted from the abolished gabelles those which were in existence during the reign of Charles V., and all such as had been farmed by the government to any individual. Other causes of jealousy intervened before these suspicions could be allayed, and the populace, now organized and accustomed to combine and use their superiority of numbers, again rose in insurrection. They advanced to renew the blockade and investment of the castles and posts maintained by the viceroy, and the war, which had been suspended, was in a great measure renewed.

The leaders of the populace, being at length conscious that they

stood in need of more experienced advisers than their order could supply, resolved to supply the place of Masaniello by electing Don Francisco Toralto, prince of Massa, a nobleman of Spanish origin, of gentle and popular manners, and who had distinguished himself as an officer in defending Catalonia against the French. The unfortunate nobleman saw the whole danger of accepting a command to be held at the pleasure of a fickle and uncertain people, who would assuredly set down to their leader's imputed treachery the bad success which might be owing to their own want of discipline. On the other hand, if he raised banners against the viceroy, he subjected himself to the pains of rebellion. To guard against this he communicated secretly with the Duke of Arcos, and obtained his sanction for accepting the command of the popular army, in order at once to restrain them within the bounds of discipline, and temporize till they should grow weary of the fatigue and dangers of war. This was on the 23rd of August.

By the influence he possessed with the new commander of the popular forces, and by the opportunity which he thereby obtained for bribing several of the Neapolitan chiefs, the viceroy obtained a truce until he should receive instructions from Spain, and in the mean while exerted himself to revictual the three citadels and increase the number of his forces. The articles of truce contained a number of popular clauses, to which the viceroy hesitated not to consent for the time, under the internal belief that the court of Spain, to which they were to be ultimately referred, would be sure to reject them.

On the first of October a fleet of five-and-thirty large vessels entered the port of Naples, and by display of the royal standard from the castles, the people learned that King Philip's natural son, Don Juan of Austria, was on board one of the ships composing this princely armament. On the event of this young dignitary's arrival being known, the Neapolitans showed great joy, anticipating that he brought the ratification of the articles which had been sworn to by the Duke of Arcos. It would appear however that the viceroy, from a spirit of revenge, and smarting under the mortifications and insults he had received from the Neapolitans, had persuaded the youthful commander that he had no alternative but to employ force in reducing them to obedience. Two days after the arrival of the fleet, therefore, without any answer being returned to the deputation sent to invite the son of their sovereign on shore, and while the citizens were preparing to receive him with every mark of personal respect—without any declaration that the truce was terminated—the Spanish troops were suddenly landed from the vessels, and united with those in the castles, after which, with swords in one hand and torches in the other, and commencing a most furious cannonade on the city from the forts and shipping, they made a general attack on all the posts in possession of the people, which lasted for

three days. This treacherous attempt met with its deserved fate. The insurgents, rallying vigorously, repulsed the Spaniards in every direction. Open war was the consequence, without the possibility of renewing a treaty which had been made a cloak for such treachery. The situation of the Prince of Massa now became excessively delicate. Considering the King of Spain as his lawful sovereign, he had undertaken the office of captain-general of the popular forces, as being likely to afford him the means of accomplishing a reconciliation between the sovereign and the people. The prospect of this was indefinitely removed, and his situation rendered him the direct, although involuntary, enemy of the Spanish government; while the Duke of Arcos's treachery had rendered any pacific arrangement next to impossible. The Prince's motions were now closely watched by the people, and indicated coldness, if not unwillingness, to exert himself in their cause. He visited the posts with less punctuality, and was frequently absent at the almost daily skirmishes which took place betwixt the exasperated factions. This conduct, it is said, was owing to the persuasions of his wife. By his courage and composure the Prince of Massa escaped the consequences of one tumult, in which the people threatened his life. But the causes of public suspicion increased, and were fostered by those favourite chiefs of the populace who envied his authority. His general of artillery went over to the Spaniards. A mine wrought under his direction, to destroy the cisterns of the Castle of St. Elmo, failed of its effect. The Prince of Massa at last became the victim of a popular tumult, headed by Gennaro Annese, the gunsmith already mentioned, and was beheaded without even being allowed time for his devotions. His head was paraded on a pike, his body dragged through the streets, his heart torn out with the brutality usual in such proceedings, and presented to his wife in a silver basin. No one can doubt that the people did wisely to deprive the Prince of Massa of his command; as, from the beginning, he accepted it by constraint, and with a reservation of his sworn fidelity to Spain. To have dismissed him in safety would have been an act of humanity; his murder was only the means of rendering the breach betwixt the nobles and the people irreconcilable. This was accordingly the case. The provinces of the kingdom were in as disorderly a state as the capital. Large troops of banditti pretending or possessing commissions from the popular chiefs, overran some districts. In others the nobles and their feudal followers took arms, assembled a flying army of 3000 horse, declared common cause with the Spaniards, and blockaded the city, preventing the importation of corn, and threatening Naples with famine. Even Gennaro Annese, who by a tumultuary election had been created captain-general of the people, could now see that, without foreign assistance, the populace of Naples must be subdued by the united force of the

Spaniards and the nobles, whom they had driven into making common cause. To obtain this assistance envoys were despatched by him and his council to Rome, to France, and to every other country of which they thought the rulers might be moved to lend them succour. This brought new actors upon the scene.

HENRY DE LORRAINE, DUKE OF GUISE, was one of the most remarkable men at the Court of France. Richelieu had, indeed, subdued and chained to the throne those great princes whose power had repeatedly shaken it; but their children still continued to cherish the high spirit of chivalry which had been the idol of their fathers; and glory and lady's love were no less the topics of the court than when Francis I. did homage to the beautiful Diana of Valentinois at Fontainebleau.

The Duke of Guise united in his person the qualities both of the romantic heroes of the period, and of such as stood high in the political world. Young, handsome, accomplished in all exercises, witty and agreeable as Grammont, amorous as Amadis, and inconstant as his brother Don Galaor, he was accounted irresistible among the fair sex. A soldier brave as Bayard, and possessed of all the ambition of all the Guises, Henry of Lorraine was fit both to conceive and to execute the most extraordinary enterprises. With the most perfect resolution, and the most acute discernment, he possessed the art of eloquence that addresses the heart through the ear, the graces of dignified simplicity which men love, but in a superior degree the power of using at will that species of cold politeness which is the most poignant way of expressing contempt. Such a character was formed to amuse, and perhaps to scandalize, the court with his amours, and disturb it with his political intrigues, in both which spheres he was remarkably active.

The Duke of Guise had been originally designed for the Church, and at fifteen years of age was promoted to the archbishopric of Rheims, though his taste inclined him towards the army. But on the death of his elder brother, the Prince of Joinville, in 1639, he instantly renounced the archbishopric, the duties of which had been performed by other hands while he was pursuing his military career in Italy and Germany, and on the death of his father next year, he joyfully returned to France, to exchange the first ecclesiastical peerage of the kingdom for the peerage of his family, more happy in his freedom than within the limits of a profession to which he could have done no honour. He fell in love with Anne de Gonzague, youngest daughter of the Duke of Nevers and Mantua, and the lady shared his passion. But having entered into the conspiracy against Richelieu, formed by the Count de Soissons, the Duke of Bouillon, and others, and fomented by the Court of Spain, the Duke of Guise partook of their disgrace in 1641, and was obliged to fly. Anne de Gonzague rendered his triumph complete by escaping in

pursuit of him in male attire. She hastened to Flanders to console her lover under the sentence of high treason and confiscation, pronounced against him during his absence ; she came—and found Guise not only in love with, but actually married to another woman. Indignant at his perfidy, she instantly returned to France.

The lady who had the honour of fixing for a moment his wavering affections was a Flemish beauty, Honorine de Glimes, widow of the Count de Bossu. The marriage ceremony was performed by a bishop, one of the lady's relations ; what were the grounds on which the Duke afterwards sought to annul the marriage, we have not been able distinctly to make out. The union, however, did not last much above three years, during which he contrived to dissipate his wife's fortune, at the end of which time both Richelieu and Louis XIII. were dead ; and the Duke of Guise having submitted himself to the Queen's (Anne of Austria's) mercy, and received his pardon, secretly left Brussels and his wife, and in 1644 reappeared in all the splendour of his adventures at the French capital. The Duke's next conquest was that of the beautiful Madame de Montbazon, which led him into an adventure that reminds us of the catastrophe of that one among Gil Blas's masters who was killed in the flower of his age for circulating forged *billets-doux*. Madame de Montbazon, who nourished some female spite against Madame de Longueville, had imputed to that lady the writing of certain love-letters which were not hers. The courtiers took different parts on this important occasion, and Henry of Lorraine loudly advocated the cause of his mistress. The Count de Coligni was the champion of Madame de Longueville ; and the lineal representatives of the great Guise and the no less great Admiral de Coligni, who fought with the fate of a kingdom and its religion on their swords, waged as deadly a war about a lady's love-letters. The Duke of Guise was victorious ; he disarmed and wounded Coligni, who died within five months, partly of grief, partly of his wounds. Shortly after, the Duke's *liaison* with Madame de Montbazon was broken off by the exile of his mistress.

After this separation, the Duke of Guise fixed his fluctuating affections upon Mademoiselle de Pons, of the highly-descended family of d'Albret. This lady, whose vanity was much more flattered than her affections were excited by the attentions of the Duke, showed herself inaccessible to every species of courtship save that which led to the altar of Hymen. The Duke of Guise would have gratified his passion even at that rate, but the claims of his Flemish spouse formed an impediment which must first be removed. Measures were adopted to obtain a divorce betwixt the Duke and the Countess, who pertinaciously maintained her conjugal rights. Meantime the Duke of Guise made two campaigns in Flanders, among those gay volunteers who entered the trenches to the music of violins, and showed the same gaiety in the

field of battle as in the ball-room. On his return, though covered with glory, Mademoiselle de Pons seemed to look coldly on him, and objected (like an unreasonable woman) to the duration of his suit with Madame de Bossu, as if, either in France, Rome, or elsewhere, a law-suit can end when a lady is tired of it. Guise, spurred by her reproaches, and fancying that his agents were remiss in his interests, declared his resolution of setting out instantly to Rome, and using his personal interest with the Pope to hasten the conclusion of his divorce. But his jealousy made it a condition, that during his absence Mademoiselle de Pons should retire to a convent, which the lady regarded as a considerable sacrifice. This was in the autumn of 1646.

At Rome the Duke conducted himself with considerable address to gain the weather-gauge of his Holiness. Pope Innocent X. was inclined at first to the Spanish faction on his elevation to the pontificate. This had been resented by the French ministers at Rome with marks of wilful disrespect, which incensed his Holiness so much, that he set himself to thwart and oppose the views of Cardinal Mazarin. He had an opportunity to do so in a tender and personal point, for Mazarin was anxious to have his brother, the Archbishop of Aix, made a cardinal—an honour seldom conferred upon two members of the same family. While conversing with the Duke of Guise on the subject, the Pope even shed tears of anger, at which the French prince was not much moved, "being aware that he could shed such at his pleasure, and was indeed an excellent actor." His mode of address to the Head of the Catholic Church was of this singular kind.

"However, I persuaded myself I gained upon him, and confidently told him, that having discovered where he was attackable, I had brought about my design, and that he must yield, having no more defences against me; then I asked him if his predominant passion were not revenge, as is usual with all Italians? and whether he would not thank me if I ruined at court such as he was dissatisfied with, making their conduct to be disapproved, and them to pass for malicious and undiscerning persons; and in fine to cause them to lose their employments, which should be bestowed on such as were more agreeable to him? He cast his arms about my neck, promising, if I could effect this, there should be nothing in the world he would refuse to do for my sake. You must then, said I, make the Archbishop of Aix cardinal, with the assurance that you had done it sooner but for the ill conduct of those you had to deal with."

Pope Innocent, upon reflection, satisfied himself that he would obtain a sure reconciliation with Mazarin by the promotion of his brother,—that he would be able to transact with France, without having communication with the Marquis de Fontenay-Mareuil and the other French agents, who had used him disrespectfully, and whose disgrace

he hoped by this means to effect. He was so much captivated by the Duke's plan, that he consented to bestow the hat of which Cardinal Mazarin had despaired, upon his brother, who afterwards took the title of Cardinal of St. Cecilia.

By this manœuvring the Duke of Guise imagined that he had secured in his interest the Pope, the French ministers, and the new-made cardinal. The issue of the expedition showed that though he had been the means of their coming to agreement, they completely outwitted him.

Just as this intrigue was completed, messenger after messenger brought to Rome the accounts of the miserable condition of the people of Naples, without a head from whom any conduct was to be expected, or any apparent means of rescue, about to fall a sacrifice to the vengeance of the King of Spain, and his viceroy the Duke of Arcos. The State of Naples, like an oppressed princess in a romance, seemed to offer herself as a reward to the champion who should relieve her from her present state of extremity. His descent from King René of Anjou gave Henry de Lorraine a connection from that family whose claims on the kingdom of the Two Sicilies were not forgotten ; and an opportunity was thus offered to the lover of Mademoiselle de Pons to place her on a throne, which her beauty would grace so highly.

Guise examined all mariners who came from Naples ; he loaded them with presents and caresses ; he spoke of their suffering country expressing an ardent desire to put a stop to its miseries ; and after more than one of his emissaries had been intercepted by the jealous vigilance of the Spaniards, the Duke at last succeeded in conveying his good wishes to the ears of the people of Naples. They heard that there was a prince at Rome, beautiful and graceful as imagination could conceive, with riches inexhaustible, and liberal in proportion to his wealth, descended from that house of Anjou which had formerly swayed the Neapolitan sceptre, who was disposed, if invited by the people, to place himself at their head, and take his risk of death or conquest.

The heads of the people, particularly Gennaro Annese, were for the present satisfied that no efforts of theirs could conduct the revolution to order or safety. A person of more character, Vincenzo Andrea, who appears to have entertained intentions of forming a republic—several others who were looking for their own safety and advancement—some also whose brains having been deranged by the crisis had never again become settled—began all at once to turn to this new-risen Star of Hope. They obtained a resolution of the people, that the Royal Republic of Naples should invite the Duke of Guise to command their armies, and enjoy the same authority at Naples as the Prince of Orange did in the Netherlands, the extent of which was probably wholly unknown to them.



When the measure was agreed upon, the most singular exaggerations took place on both sides—on the one, to impress the Duke with a false idea of the forces of the people—and on the other, to fill the people with an extravagant expectation of the assistance to be derived from France. To the former, 170,000 men were said to be in arms, with ample funds for their maintenance, derived from confiscations, to the amount of two or three millions in gold. Powder, they said, they had in abundance, and two or three hundred men were engaged in making more. The whole military posts were described as well mounted with cannon, and the place as abundantly provided with corn by those districts which had joined the insurrection. On the other hand, one Luigi del Ferro, a crack-brained person, who had taken upon himself the quality of ambassador of France at Naples, had offered the people in the French king's name a million of gold, fifty ships of war, thirty galleys, ten vessels laden with corn, fifty pieces of cannon, twelve thousand foot, and four thousand horse, with ammunition sufficient for above two years; he asserted also, that the Duke of Guise was coming to put himself into their hands as hostage for all these things, and offered to give himself up as prisoner to secure them with the price of his head. In a word, this self-created diplomatist advanced such exorbitant proposals as appeared totally incredible and ridiculous.

It must always be remembered, that the general intercourse between states, which were even in a close neighbourhood, was then in the highest degree imperfect, and that intelligence concerning what was passing at Naples could only be derived from the ordinary boatmen or fruit-sellers, who brought their tidings to Rome with all manner of popular exaggeration, or from those interested and sanguine persons, who came with such news as were most likely to be agreeable, and to render the bearers welcome. On the occasions now mentioned they did what was equally fatal to both sides, they disguised from the Duke of Guise the necessities of the Neapolitans, and exaggerated to the citizens the means of the Duke to supply them.

It is probable that Guise gave only a limited credence to the flattering tales which were brought to him of the state of the city. But he was a willing dupe to a great part of the exaggeration. The reason lay here. If the Duke waited the arrival of a French fleet, French soldiers, French money, and French stores, he could only make conquests under the auspices of France. Nay, in such case France might send to Naples a prince of the blood royal, to reap that harvest which the adventurous Duke might have challenged as his own. If he threw himself into Naples before any French armament was advancing thither, unfettered by instructions, unaided—but at the same time uncontrolled—by a French army, which would of course be guided by commands from Paris, he might, according to his ardent views, “trust to his stars, his fortunes,

and his strength, to attach so strong a party of the Neapolitans to his side as might render him the director of future events, and compel whatever French auxiliaries might be sent to his assistance to act as subjects, not brothers of the war. The Duke of Guise was therefore resolved at all risks, and without the attendance of any Frenchmen, save a few of his own family, to throw himself into the midst of the disorderly capital of Naples, and by his own energies establish the authority.

The Marquis de Fontenay, the French minister at Rome, disapproved of the Duke's enterprise, considering that the scheme, if unsuccessful, was likely entirely to destroy the French interest at Naples, but, if successful, that it would lead to consequences more favourable to the Duke's ambitious projects than he was disposed to encourage. If Naples were to be a separate kingdom, and only an *appanage* of France, unquestionably Cardinal Mazarin would have desired that a prince of the blood should hold the throne. The Duke of Anjou, the Prince of Conti, or Prince Thomas of Savoy, might either of them have met his views as a candidate. Much more would he have wished that so fair a kingdom should have been made a direct dependency of France, to be governed by a viceroy. Either of these plans was inconsistent with that of the Duke of Guise, the power of whose house, which had been with such difficulty reduced, there seemed little policy in restoring, especially when its representative was a man of so much genius and enterprise. These opinions of the cardinal and the French envoy were probably justified by their knowledge of Guise's character. His ambitious spirit was not likely to be satisfied with holding the place of a mere temporary viceroy, and still less to yield up the authority which he should gain by his sole personal risk. On the contrary, although when the affair was canvassed he protested that his conquests and acquisitions should be all at the King of France's unlimited disposal, yet, should he be once placed at the head of affairs in Naples, it was likely that some nominal acknowledgment of feudal dependence, and the advantage of having weakened Spain by dismembering such a limb of her empire, would be the only important results which France would reap by the Duke of Guise's success. Moved by these considerations, they endeavoured to keep the Duke in suspense until they could equip a squadron, and take the adventure into their own hands, allowing him no other than a subordinate share. But the Duke felt his advantage, and pressed both the cardinal and his brother, M. de Fontenay, and the other French ministers at Rome, extremely close. He had received, as he showed them, an invitation from those who were at the head of the insurgents at Naples, but it must be instantly accepted, or would be for ever lost. The people, he stated, would be driven to despair. They might lay down their arms to the Spaniards: they might

call in the Turks, who were within fifty miles of them. In short, France would lose the most precious opportunity to lower the power of the House of Austria, which had occurred for a century. At the same time, the Duke protested that the blame should be at the door of the servants of the crown, since he himself was ready to venture his person upon an expedition so precarious without any attendants save a few servants. Cardinal Mazarin and the French ministers were now obliged to consent, imputing the reluctance which they could not conceal to their anxiety for the Duke's safety. In reply to his application to the French minister at Rome for instructions, the Duke says that all he could get from them was, "Manage well the war, and drive the Spaniards out of Naples, and for all else regulate yourself as you shall judge to best purpose, and as you shall find good or evil conjunctures."

The Duke of Guise took into his party of fourteen persons very few who were above the rank of mere domestics, and of these few only two were French. It was supposed proper to accustom the Neapolitans to the sight of the French by degrees, as their character for engaging in petulant and licentious intrigues made them highly offensive to the jealous Italians. The fact might probably be, that, in taking few French, the Duke avoided encumbering himself with any spies on the part of the French government.

The first and most important of the two Frenchmen who shared the dangers of the Duke of Guise in this enterprise, was *Esprit de Raymond*, *Comte de Modene*, author of the *Memoirs* before us. He was born in 1608, and educated at court as a page of Monsieur, brother of Louis XIII. This gentleman was a person of sense and sagacity, well acquainted with military affairs, and a bold and determined leader. But he was addicted to the study of astrology, and appears to have been opinionative and disputatious to a degree which the Duke of Guise, to whose fortunes he had attached himself, could not tolerate. They were sincere, and even affectionate friends, but we think we can see from the commencement the causes which failed not at last to sow discord between them. Older by eight years, "graver by many a pound of phlegm," the Count, from the original concoction of the expedition, seems to have established himself as the Duke's Mentor, a part only fit to be personified by Minerva or the abstract spirit of wisdom, since, in merely human hands, it is apt to degenerate into an almost intolerable nuisance. In reading the *Comte de Modene's* reflections, we must own, we forgive the Duke of Guise for his occasional impatience when suffering under the infliction of his advice. The Count's remarks are, indeed, always sensible, and often undeniable; but they are detailed with such unnecessary minuteness, that the reader sees the meaning, as Lord Ogleby does the lady in *Lovegold's* pleasure-ground, long before the "crinkum-crankum" of the expression

permits you to reach it legitimately. Besides, when attained, it often turns out to be a proposition so obvious and undeniable, that it must be conceded in a moment. In addition to this inclination for prosing, with which the consciousness of superior age and superior gravity had invested the Comte de Modene, he had also the rage of intruding his advice upon the most delicate and tender topics ; for example—that of the Duke's attachment to Mademoiselle de Pons ; and he wondered when he found his patron, the most mercurial of men, fretted and irritated, instead of receiving his sermons with the deference of *puer sub ferula*.

The second Frenchman of whom we spoke was M. de Cerisantes, a young man of quick parts, a poet and a good scholar,—brave and active, but petulant and ambitious. He had charge of the correspondence, in cypher, which was to pass between the Duke and the French government ; and in this way often volunteered direct communications from himself, in which he did not always preserve the respect due to his patron.

A small fleet of feluccas (boats barely capable of conveying three men) was sent from Naples, to transport thither in safety, if possible, a general, without troops, arms, ammunition, or artillery. Meanwhile there remained one want which was absolutely indispensable. To give an idea of the Comte de Modene's singular talent of proving that which required no proof, we shall here quote his own words :—

"He represented to the Duke, with his ordinary sincerity and frankness, that, having been so successful as to gain the envoy of the Neapolitans, and obtain the consent of the French ambassador to his departure, there were two things which he must absolutely attend to ;—the one being to agree to the popular conditions, on which he was called to Naples,—the other to procure some money, for which he must needs have occasion, both for the expense of his voyage and the price of some equipments and stores which he must take with him, and also to bear his expenses at the outset of his government. Moreover, it would have an indifferent effect on the populace, if, having supposed him unequipped with any means of relief, save money, they should observe that he was in want of that most indispensable article also ; farther, &c. &c. &c."\*

In short, we defy the most accomplished *bore* (the word has been at the point of our pen for a quarter of an hour) in Christendom, to ring more changes on Iago's simple chime, "Put money in the purse."

The Duke had not waited for these elaborate proofs of an indisputable truth. His letter to his brother, the Chevalier de Guise, (29th October), is couched in terms which at once intimate the height of his hopes and his earnestness of preparation. He exhorts him to "rifle"

their friends and relations of whatever money or jewels they can spare, since the whole family are interested in assisting their *Head* on this occasion.

"If we may believe honest Machiavel, I shall be more puissant than the Great Turk, since he could not draw together a hundred-and-seventy thousand men, which is the number that in arms attend to receive my orders. Naples is a fair theatre of honour, where I am to encounter a son of the King of Spain, put his army to flight, take three castles and other fortresses of the kingdom, and recover ten posts that have been lost to the enemy, and kept by them well fortified in that one city. Who hath more work to do, and more honour to gain, if I play my part well? How difficult soever it may appear, I am made believe I shall overcome it very shortly after my arrival; I will keep something yet for you to do, and you shall have your part if you take care to send me good store of money. Adieu,—I detain you too long, considering the little time I have for making my despatch. Plunder all you can lay your hands on, and, if possible, the great diamonds of honest Chevereuse: leave nothing in the Hotel de Guise—in a word, let neither locks nor bolts be proof against your fingers."

He anxiously solicited his mother also.—"You must not," answered the noble lady, "be stopped for want of a little money. I send all my jewels, amounting to 10,000 crowns. If you are unfortunate, I can get others. But unfortunate you will not be." He raised other supplies as he could, the Cardinal of St. Cecilia assisting him in negotiating a loan with a banker in Rome; and the Duke mentions a female who came to offer him all her plate and jewels, and 10,000 crowns, the whole savings of her life, which he generously refused to accept.

The sinews of war being thus provided, the Duke of Guise determined to embark. Followed by all the French in Rome, who accompanied him on horseback to his boats, he took his route to Fiumicino. As they passed the hotel of the Spanish ambassador,—"*Guise*," said the Duke, "must not go to war in silence,"—and he commanded his trumpets to blow a point of defiance.

With his slender stores, a retinue of twenty-two men, including the Neapolitan envoys, and a fleet amounting to three brigantines and eight feluccas, the party finally embarked on the 13th day of November, late at night, the least and lightest of the feluccas carrying "*Cæsar* and his fortune." At first, their course was without obstacle; but on the evening of the 14th, when they had been at sea twenty-four hours, and were coasting Mount Cicello, they beheld the Spanish galleys, which, apprised by signals from the watch-tower, stood out from the Isle of Ponza and the port of Gaeta to intercept them. The feluccas dispersed different ways; that which had the Duke on board ran towards the coast of Gaeta, and by that means avoided sus-

picion, as the Spaniards supposed it to be landing some country people. Another danger arose ; the weather became squally, and the boatman, unable to pursue his course, declared there was absolutely a necessity for going ashore, though the country was in possession of the Spaniards, or the nobility their allies. The Duke insisted upon keeping the sea, and the weather becoming milder, seemed to yield to his resolution. On nearing Naples, he directed his felucca to be steered straight for the Spanish admiral, as if it had been an advice-boat coming with despatches. This manœuvre ensured their safety for some time. But when, altering her course suddenly, the felucca shot down towards Naples, the attention of all within and without the city was directed towards her. All the Spanish galleys opened their guns on this minute object, while the Duke stood up on the felucca, as if to brave his enemies, and show himself to his friends of the city, who crowded the beach to receive him ; and they, in their turn, fired eagerly for his protection, both from batteries and with musquetry. Sea and land were in equal agitation, friends and enemies watching the event. At length, the felucca touched land ; and the Duke of Guise was received with such rapturous welcome as was likely to be inspired into a lively and quick-feeling people, by the romantic and perilous mode of his arrival. His companions reached Naples in safety two days after him.

The prepossessing countenance of the Duke of Guise, his fine person, the grace with which he managed the steed which was brought for his use, enchanted the populace, and even the better classes of Naples, who augured from his appearance that he would place a limit to the fury of the democracy. Meanwhile, having heard mass, the Duke received a message from the Captain-general, Gennaro Annese, who, having taken possession of the Tower of the Carmelites, a strong bastile or species of citadel, lived there with a band of wretches, his companions and instruments in plundering, scarcely daring to leave it for fear of the fate which threatened him, and which he deserved infinitely better than Masaniello. We shall let the Duke of Guise himself paint the den of Cacus, the picture of his household, and the effect produced by the appearance of Luigi del Ferro, whom the French ministers addressed as the ambassador of their master. The Memoirs of 1828, though written with great spirit, are not quite so *naïve* as the original on which they are founded, which, although like the work of a Dutch painter it has its coarse features, is nevertheless a curious likeness of a Robespierre or Marat of the 17th century

Being introduced to Gennaro Annese :—

“I was not a little surprised,” says the Duke, “at the blindness of the people of Naples, to have chosen such a man their general ; his person seemed to me so extraordinary, that I cannot omit to give

you his picture. He was a little man, very ill made, and very black, his eyes sunk in his head, short hair, which discovered large ears, a wide mouth, his beard close cut and beginning to be grey, his voice full and very hoarse—he could not speak two words without stammering, ever unquiet, and so very timorous that the least noise made him tremble. He was attended by a matter of twenty guards of as ill men as himself. He wore a buff coat with sleeves of red velvet, and scarlet breeches, with a cap of cloth of gold, of the same colour, on his head, which he hardly took the pains to take off when he saluted me; he had a girdle of red velvet, furnished with three pistols on each side; he wore no sword, but instead of it, carried a great blunderbuss in his hand. His first civility was the taking off my hat, and instead of it, causing to be brought me in a silver basin such a cap as his own; and then taking me by the hand, led me into his hall, whose doors he very carefully caused to be shut, with most strict orders to his guards to let none enter, lest they should cut his throat. As soon as we were seated, I presented him M. de Fontenay's letter, with assurance (as I had been ordered) of the protection of France, and of the coming of the fleet, and all such supplies as the Neapolitans should stand in need of, towards attaining their liberty and deliverance from the Spanish oppression. He answered me with much more satisfaction than eloquence, and having opened the letter I delivered him, ran it over with his eyes, and having turned upwards every one of the four sides, cast it to me again, telling me he could not read, and desiring me to acquaint him with its contents.

“Whilst this passed, somebody knocked at the door, as if they intended to break it down: this gave us an alarm, and the cry from without mentioning the ambassador of France that was desirous to see me, the door was opened; and preparing myself to go and receive him with the ceremony due to his character, I was amazed to see a man without a hat, his sword drawn, two great chaplets (like a hermit's) about his neck, on the one whereof, he said, he prayed for the King, and on the other for the people, who, casting himself down at his full length, and throwing away his sword, embracing my legs, kissed my feet; with much ado I raised him up, and was doubtful whether I should give him M. de Fontenay's letter, which treated him with the quality of Excellence, and the King's ambassador, seeing in the person of *Sieur Luigi del Ferro* rather the figure of a madman broke out of *Bedlam*, than of the minister of a great crown; but supposing he might have some concealed good quality that I had not yet discovered, considering the great credit he who encharged me with that letter assured me he had acquired amongst the people, I thought myself obliged to deliver it, lest I might be blamed for not executing punctually what had been enjoined me.

"We heard a great noise in the street, occasioned by a tumult of such people as demanded to see me ; to satisfy their curiosity I went to a window ; and Gennaro having caused to be brought me, in two basins, two bags of money, one of gold and the other of silver, I cast it amongst the people, and whilst they were at cuffs about gathering it up, I thought it was time to call for dinner, having eaten nothing since my departure from Rome, because of the roughness of the sea. Gennaro made excuses for the ill cheer he should give me, not daring, for fear of poison, to make use of any other cook than his wife, as improper for that employment as personating the lady of quality. She brought the first dish, having on a gown of sky-coloured wrought satin, embroidered with silver, with a farthingale, a chain of jewels, and a fair necklace of pearl, with pendants of diamonds in her ears, all plundered from the Duchess of Matalone ; and in this stately equipage it was pleasant to see her dress meat, scour dishes, and divert herself in the afternoon with washing and smoothing linen. I invited Luigi del Ferro, as ambassador, to wash and sit down with us ; but Gennaro told me, sure I was not in earnest, for he had wont to use him like a dog : and when I called for drink, he fetched it, saying, it belonged only to him to serve me, because of his quality. He presented me the cup on his knees, which, when I would not permit, Gennaro told me he served him in the same manner, which presently after I saw verified. Dinner lasted not long, and all things were so nasty and unsavoury, that had it not been for the bread, wine, salad, and fruit, which were indeed excellent, I had run hazard of starving."

On examining the state of affairs as narrowly as he could, the Duke had the mortification to find the popular fury against the Spaniards subsided to a low ebb, and that had he not arrived when he did, the people had almost agreed to lay down their arms, while the chiefs, accusing one another of a secret correspondence with the common enemy, fortified their quarters against each other with much more anxiety than against the Spaniards. Of the divisions between them the Duke saw a curious instance the very evening of his arrival.

"A butcher, one of the city captains, called Jommo Ropolo, a man seditious and violent, broke down the door of the chamber where we were at council, and coming up to Gennaro, and calling him traitor, with all his force gave him three or four blows on the neck, which was bare, with the flat of his hand, swearing he would cut off his head, from which nothing detained him but my presence, and the respect he bore me. Gennaro cast himself at his feet, weeping, and embracing his knees, begged his life. I interposed to make them friends, and did it, as having authority, sending Jommo Ropolo to his quarter, which I pro-



mised to visit the next morning, as well as all the rest of the city, appointing him in the mean time to keep good guard."

The next details with which the Duke was treated, conveyed the information that instead of a hundred-and-seventy thousand men in arms, the service of three or four thousand, scarcely sufficient to defend the various forts, was all that could be relied on; and that money was wanting for their pay, without which there was no reliance to be placed upon them. To add to this ominous intelligence, so different from what he had been taught to expect, he himself witnessed the return of a force chiefly composed of banditti which Jacomo Rosso had led on an expedition against the nobles, with every token of a severe defeat. Amid the gloomy thoughts which this state of things generated, the Duke had still to go through the most extraordinary part of the evening.

"It being now very late and I wanting rest, every one retired, and I had a supper brought as unhandsome and distasteful as my dinner; it lasted not long, and inquiring in what part they had prepared me a bed, I was not a little surprised when Gennaro told me I should lie with him; having refused this as much as I possibly could, out of pretence of not incommoding his wife by taking her place, he told me she should lie on a quilt before the fire with her sister, and that it concerned his safety to share his bed with me, without which his enemies would cut his throat, the respect of my person being the only means to secure him from that danger, whose apprehension had so strongly prepossessed him, that he awaked twenty times in the night in disorder, and, with tears in his eyes, embracing me, besought me to save his life, and secure him from those that would murder him. He conducted me to a lodge in his kitchen, where I found a very rich bed of cloth of gold, and at the feet of it, in a cradle, a little blackamore slave about two years old, full of the small-pox; a great deal of plate, both white and gilt, heaped up in the middle of the room, many cabinets half open, out of which tumbled chains and bracelets of pearl and other jewels, some bags of silver and some of gold half scattered on the ground, very rich household stuff, and many fair pictures thrown up and down disorderly, which made sufficiently appear what profit he had made by plundering the houses of the richest and best-qualified persons of the town; though he could never be induced to assist the people with the smallest part of it, either to buy ammunition or victuals, for paying the troops already raised, or making new levies. This put me in a rage, to see myself in want of everything, and yet to have so considerable supplies at hand, which I might make no use of.

"On the other side of the kitchen were all necessaries, in great quantity, which had been plundered in several quarters, with all manner of arms, all in an extraordinary confusion, the presents and contribu-

tions he daily received of all manner of venison and wild fowl powdered, and all the walls tapestried with whatever is edible.

"This was the sumptuous apartment prepared for entertaining me, and when even, oppressed with sleep, I thought of nothing but a speedy unclothing myself to get into bed, Luigi del Ferro would suffer none to come near to pull off my boots, maintaining it belonged to him alone to do me all manner of services ; but I refused him, till Gennaro advising me to let him do it, caused his own stocking to be pulled off, to give me example, which I afterwards followed without controversy, and got into bed as fast as I could. Gennaro came presently to lie down by me, and setting a candle on the bed, and unbinding his leg to dress it, I asked if he had received any wound? He answered, that being naturally replete and full of humours, a physician, his friend, had advised him to make use of a remedy I forbear to name, lest its mention offend other stomachs as much as its sight did mine.

"You have heard now how I passed the first day of my arrival in Naples, and my reception, whose disagreeable beginning (the first surprisal of sleep over) made me pass very thoughtfully the remainder of the night with many reflections on the present condition of my affairs, and the danger I was to undergo. But at last, having resolved myself against all events whatever, I expected day with extreme impatience, that I might begin to work all things necessary as well for preservation of the place into which I had cast myself, as my own particular, since my safety or ruin could no longer depend on any but myself, and that myself alone must become the artificer of my good or evil fortune.

"Saturday in the morning, as soon as I was up, I went with Gennaro to hear mass at the Carmelites, who failed not (for upholding his quality of the people's general) to take the right hand of me. Luigi del Ferro went before us bareheaded, carrying a naked sword, and (in compliance with the French mode) with a great deal of hair ; he had a black periwig made of a horse's tail, such as in our theatres are worn by furies, and incessantly cried out, 'Let the people live, and General Gennaro, and the Duke of Guise ;' and, transported either with joy or madness, struck with his sword all that came in his way, and hurt so many, he had like to have made a tumult. To be quit of him I was fain to give him an employment."

It may be worth mentioning that this admirable representative of royalty was so well acquainted with the state of the court and royal family of France, that in walking through the streets, happening to encounter a picture of Henry IV., with his long grey beard, he went on his knees to pay homage to it as the picture of the reigning monarch, Louis XIV., who was then a child.

The unfortunate hero of this extraordinary enterprise was thus liter-

ally doomed to experience that "politics as well as misery make men acquainted with strange bedfellows," and for eight nights the lover of the beautiful Montbazon, and of Mademoiselle de Pons, continued to share the couch of the gunsmith. Henry de Lorraine, however, did not suffer all this penance uncompensated. By means of the Signora Annese (the arguments which he used are not mentioned) he abstracted from Gennaro's hoards considerable treasure, which the miser missed, but for want of being able to read, write, or keep accounts, he could not make out the deficiency. This is one of the points which the author of the "*Duke of Guise at Naples*" leaves in the shade. The Comte de Modene also says he extracted from Gennaro a large sum of money for the Duke's levies, but whether by the same species of alchemy we are not informed.

Whatever be the state of a general's affairs, he never fails to have plenty of competitors for the commissions in his gift. Shortly after Guise's arrival a violent competition took place for the office of camp-master-general, to which no less than four persons laid claim; namely, his secretary Cerisantes, the Comte de Modene, Pepe Palombe, and Michael de Santis the butcher, whose pretensions were founded on his having cut off the head of the unfortunate prince of Massa. It is worth noticing, however, as a curious specimen of the honour of the time, which was like a hot-tempered horse, more terrified at the shadow than at the substance of dishonour, that the Duke dismissed Santis with unrepressed contempt, which did not prevent his acting as if he had got the office. He excused himself to Palombe, whom he suspected of intercourse with the Spaniards; he rebuked Cerisantes for pretending to an office he was unfit for; and he made Modene his camp-master-general, not, however, until the latter had obtained the commission from Gennaro and the captains of the quarters and heads of the people, with whom he had ingratiated himself. The Duke was displeased at this proceeding, as an encroachment on his authority, and signed another commission for him, commanding him to carry back that of the people, and cancel it before them, which he did, "very much satisfied to have by such address obtained his purpose." The Comte protests that he only desired the office in order to keep it open till the arrival of the Duke's brother, the Chevalier de Guise; but this could not have been very clearly understood by the Duke, who seems to think his Mentor acted rather selfishly on the occasion, in hastening too early to demand a share of the spoils ere the adventure was achieved.

In respect to the general state of the kingdom, the Duke of Guise found it totally and inextricably embroiled by the contending factions. In the three castles and ten fortified posts, and on board of the considerable fleet which lay in the bay, there was quartered a Spanish army, not numerous enough to conquer so large a city, while the heat of the in-

surrection lasted, but which waited with the vindictive composure and patience of Castilians, till time and opportunity should bring the season of revenge. Secondly, in the kingdom of Naples several large towns had followed the example of the capital; others, with the provinces, were swept by robbers or banditti, who now assumed the more honourable name of popular soldiers. But the main part of the open country was held by the nobility at the heads of their feudal vassals, who, although unfriendly to the Spaniards, were incomparably more exasperated against the populace of Naples, who had murdered their friends and relations, burned their houses, pillaged their property, and raged against them more cruelly than against the Spaniards, the oppressors of both. Thirdly, the Neapolitans themselves were divided. The lower orders, with whom the tumult had originated, were well enough pleased to maintain the revolution, which plunder and idleness rendered a thriving trade. But, on the other hand, the lesser nobles and gentry of the city, the merchants, lawyers, and principal shopkeepers, in short, all the class distinguished as *Black Cloaks*,—that is, men of decent attire, manners, and education—were totally averse to the revolution, although far from being able to agree on the best means of ending it.

Upon considering this state of affairs, the Duke of Guise adopted the natural plan of endeavouring, by means of Cardinal Filomarino and other fitting agents, to give such satisfactory assurances of his favour to the noblesse as might induce them, under confidence in him and his protection, to make common cause with the people. This plan seems to have been defeated chiefly from the want of money, troops, stores, and all the *matériel* of war, a want which, in the eyes of a jealous party, is not to be compensated by valour, talent, courtesy, nor the other virtues of an individual, however princely. On the other hand, the Spaniards began with great policy to countermine the councils of the Duke of Guise. They employed a sly and insinuating person named Augustino Mollo, a lawyer, to worm himself into the confidence of the Duke, who, in pretending to point out the measures which he represented as likely to conciliate the better order of citizens or *Black Cloaks*, thrust upon him such as were sure to excite the suspicion and hatred of Gennaro Annese and the *Unshod*, as they were called, that is, the *Sans Culottes* of the place and time.

The Comte de Modene says he foresaw that the Duke would fall into this snare, and regrets that his office of camp-master-general carried him to the army without the walls, and prevented his remaining on his post near the Duke so that he might have warned him against his prevailing foible, a susceptibility to flattery and assentation on the part of artful counsellors. It is not unlikely that the Duke had this defect, as few men are without it, and that the profuse reason of the Comte de

Modene might have supplied a sort of mental tonic, if the patient's stomach would have been able to support it.

But the truth seems to be that the manners and conduct of the Duke were universally acceptable to the nobility and the Black Cloaks, as well as to the common people, and if he had received any considerable part of the succours which he expected from France, and appeared at the head of an independent force at his own disposal, they might have trusted and united with him. But what was there to give the nobility confidence in a prince who, for his only soldiers, commanded the Lazaroni and Cavaoli, (inhabitants of cellars,) the agents in the late revolutionary murders which had so often deluged the streets of the capital with blood. And yet these, with regiments of Turkish galley slaves and banditti, were the only forces which the Duke of Guise could assemble.

"These last," says the Duke himself, "are a sort of people very proper for insurrections, but that commit so many disorders and outrages, that they ruin all wheresoever they pass; and who afterwards are usually made sacrifices to the public hatred, the affection of the people being regained at the price of their heads, after they have performed all such services as they are capable of; they regard neither word nor oath in their capitulations, nor make any difference in the usage of such towns and places as yield voluntarily, or are stormed by force; with them the example of fathers is to be followed, who burn the rods after the correction of their children."

The spirit which was infused on the Duke of Guise's arrival, his wise dispositions, his gallant bearing in the field, produced a general inclination in his favour. It was necessary to open the communication betwixt Naples and the country, in order that the markets might be supplied with corn. He encountered near Aversa a superior force of the army of the noblesse. He attacked it, pistol in hand, rallied his men repeatedly, fought alone when no one would stand by him, realized the exploits of an Amadis, and, though rather vanquished than victor, remained master of the field. He opened a communication with some of the principal noblesse of the kingdom, where much courtesy was shown on both sides; but which produced no other result than the expression of their pity that so truly brave a prince should be reduced to fight at the head of such cowardly troops. He left the Comte de Modene to pass the siege of Aversa, and returned to the capital, where a French fleet, equipped from Toulon, had appeared in the bay.

Here, then, was the point to which the enterprise had been conducted. The French succours, so long looked for, and which might be expected to turn the scale in his favour, had at last arrived. Of these he was promised about 2000 men, with arms, powder, and other supplies; but, on explanation, these supplies were not to be placed in

his hands, but in those of Gennaro Annese, with whom, as captain and generalissimo of the Neapolitan people, the leaders were ordered to communicate on the part of the King of France. A scheme was thus intimated altogether to pass by the Duke of Guise and his authority, and to put the French succours under charge of an animal equally cowardly and incapable. The Duke of Guise, astonished at the turn which was thus given to the expedition, exclaimed against the ignorance, brutality, and treachery of Gennaro, and exalted his own superior interest with the people. "Let that appear, then," said the Abbé Basqui, the French envoy, who accompanied the expedition, "when we see you at the head of the people of Naples, you shall command the supplies—till then Gennaro Annese is the principal authority, and with him alone can we communicate."

It would have been of the highest importance to the Duke's project, if he could have reconciled the jealous and rankling disposition of Gennaro to act in concert with him. The French troops once landed, it was easy to see who must command them, and Gennaro would not have sate more securely, though his power might have lasted a little longer. But the Duke, intent on exhibiting to the French envoy his complete power over the Neapolitans, collected his own partizans, and had the pleasure to hear twenty or thirty thousand men salute him with the title of king. He declined it, indeed, but the proposal having been made, alarmed the jealousy of all who, like Vincenzo Andrea, had any views towards a republic, and still more the French, who were by no means prepared for the acknowledgment of the Duke of Guise as sovereign of Naples. As yet, however, the title depended on the resignation of Gennaro; but that imbecile demagogue, from sheer intimidation, submitted to the superior claims and courage of the Duke of Guise, although internally burning with hatred and the thirst of vengeance. The Duke, if we may believe the evidence of his father confessor, Capecio, (which is not however altogether disinterested, owing to quarrels between them at a later period,) was dreadfully enraged against the French for disappointing him of the supplies, and at the necessity which made him limit himself to the title of Duke, instead of King of Naples. In bitterness of heart, he is averred to have trampled upon a piece of embroidery, because it exhibited *fleurs de lis*, and abused the French in the most coarse terms. Something of this may probably be true, but the vulgar Italian friar has certainly lent his own sentiments and language to the high-born courtier of Louis XIV.

On the 21st of December, Henry of Lorraine was formally recognized as *Duke of the Republic, Protector of the Liberties, and Generalissimo of the Armies of Naples*, and the Memoirs of 1828 give us an interesting account of the order and ceremony with which he main-

tained the dignity of his high office. The attendance of guards, dinners in public, with the graceful carriage of one of the most graceful princes then living, all contributed to adorn the emblems of sovereignty. But if the assumption of this title elevated his authority in appearance, it operated in reality to diminish and undermine it. While he had no distinct situation, save that of commander-in-chief, no faction was willing to disturb him, because each had hopes that he might steer its course. Now that he had shown such a precise object, and that a tendency to self-aggrandizement, he lost the support of all who, in that distracted city, would willingly have desired another termination of the revolution, as well as of the greater though more ignorant mass, who found their interest in continuing the state of confusion.

The first fatal consequences of this false step was the retreat of the French fleet, after what a British sailor would call a *lubberly* action with the Spaniards, in which the French, however, had the advantage. Under pretence of want of water, they bore away to return no more, leaving the Duke not merely without succours, but with the discredit of being disowned and abandoned by his country. This was a blow not to be recovered.

Left thus to his own resources, Guise availed himself of them with the most undaunted spirit. Every day brought some fresh danger, every danger found him ready to meet it; he suppressed tumults, and punished the leaders—quelled mutinies of troops under arms, and killed with his own hand the mutineers who opposed him, maintaining to the very last the character of sovereign which he had assumed. On one of these occasions, his friends having remonstrated with him on the personal danger to which he exposed himself, he made the characteristic reply “that he had a natural contempt for the rabble, and that when God framed a person of his quality, he imprinted something on his forehead which could not be beheld by it without trembling!”\* He escaped assassination by the dagger, he eluded another attack upon his life by poison. It is much less to his honour, that in one of the transactions which we assuredly do not find in the modern account of his reign at Naples, he condescended to retort on the miserable Gennaro Annese, by measures only fitting such a miscreant to employ. Here is the passage from his Memoirs, and the reader will admire the coolness with which it is told.

“Augustino Mollo, to free me from this difficulty, came at night and told me, ‘I have brought you that will free you from Gennaro; his treasons merit death, and in what manner justice be done on him is not very material: look on this vial-full of so clear and beautiful water, in

\* The words of the original are, “que naturellement je ne craignois point la canaille, et que quand Dieu formoit une personne de ma condition, il lui imprimoit je ne sais quoi entre les deux yeux qu’elle n’osât regarder sans trembler.”

four day's time it will punish all his infidelities ; the captain of the guard shall undertake to give it him, without his distrust, it having no taste at all.' On the next day, which was Friday, he caused him to drink it all at dinner ; but whether the dose was too weak, or that having eaten nothing but cabbage dressed with oil, (which is certainly a great antidote,) he fell a vomiting immediately, which freed him from a danger so evident, and that appeared so certain. He escaped with a head-ache and pain in his stomach for four or five days, without any suspicion of the matter."

Another instance of punctilious scrupulousness, where one would hardly have expected anything of the kind, occurred in a similar practice upon Annese's life by the agency of the captain of his guard. This conscientious person, equally obliging in his disposition and punctilious in his duty, readily offered to *poison* Gennaro whenever the Duke pleased, if his Highness would provide him with wherewithal to do it, but he would not willingly undertake to *poniard* him, as that would be unhandsome, and unbecoming an officer of his guard. We may suppose, in the same manner, that a cook of Gennaro would have declined putting ratsbane in his master's porridge, but saw no objection whatever to cutting his throat, or chopping off his head with a cleaver. The Duke tells us fairly where his own scruples on the subject lay :—"I would not," he says, "undertake his death in such a manner that I might appear the author of it, lest it might acquire me the indignation of France, who, believing him faithful to her, would rather attribute his death to my particular ambition, (he being the main obstacle in my way,) than to the just punishment of his disloyalty."

The Duke of Guise's indifference on the subject will remind the reader of similar incidents in the court history of France, about the same period. But the frequent instances of arbitrary power on which his situation forced him, seem to have awakened in the Duke the spirit of despotism which was of old a characteristic of the house of Lorraine. His Mentor, the Comte de Modene, had been some time absent from him. He had however rendered him great service. He had taken Aversa and threatened Capua, a place of still greater importance. Whether pluming himself on his merits, and therefore acting with a certain degree of independence, or whether imposed upon by his officers, who were chiefly captains of banditti, he had opposed some orders of the Duke, had permitted, as his commander was informed, some pillage in Aversa, and finally had declined to see the Duke's orders fulfilled respecting the execution of certain soldiers. From these accusations the Comte de Modene justifies himself at great length, while the Duke also exculpates him from evil intentions, and only blames him for being too much influenced by his inferior officers, and presuming upon their former friendship, without consideration of



the circumstances, which rendered him hot and choleric. At length, in one of their last interviews together, the Comte de Modene, who had been ordered to Naples by the Duke, was informed by him that, apprised of the weakness of the Spaniards, he had called most of his troops from the country, to take part in a general attack upon their forts, by which he meant to put his fortunes on the cast of a bold adventure. The humour of contradiction seized the Count, and in an evil hour he criticized the scheme severely, without producing any other effect than seeing his office divided, and the exercise of it in the city committed to another person. To add to his disgrace with the Duke, the Count was seized that night with a sore throat or quinsy, which prevented his taking a part in the general attack. His absence was doubtless set down to disaffection, and he seems to have augmented suspicion by holding intercourse with persons whom the Duke distrusted.

Meantime the regiments of banditti from the country poured in. They wore the same picturesque dress and arms which are still used by them in such parts of Italy as they are suffered to subsist in, and which is found to produce such an effect on the imagination of young persons, that it is prohibited as a disguise even at masquerades. We cannot help inserting the Duke's description of them.

"They were three thousand and five hundred men, of whom the oldest came short of five-and-forty years, and the youngest was above twenty. They were all tall and well made, with long black hair for the most part curled, coats of black Spanish leather, with sleeves of velvet or cloth of gold, cloth breeches, with gold lace, most of them scarlet; girdles of velvet, laced with gold, with two pistols on each side, a cutlass, hanging at a belt suitably trimmed, three fingers broad and two feet long, a hawking bag at their girdle, and a powder-flask hung about their neck with a great silk ribbon; some of them carried firelocks and other blunderbusses; they had all good shoes, with silk stockings, and every one a cap of cloth of gold or cloth of silver of different colours on his head, which was very delightful to the eye."

Having reviewed this extraordinary and romantic-seeming army, the Duke of Guise never questioned but that he would be next day complete master of Naples. But to steal and rob is one thing, and to fight another; the famished and exhausted Spaniards beat off almost all the attacks, and several of the chiefs of the banditti behaved like cowards or traitors. Mellone, the camp-master-general for the city, proved a Spaniard at heart, and acted coldly, which increased the Duke of Guise's displeasure towards the Comte de Modene.

In the Duke's resentment, he did one notable act of justice. Paul of Naples, one of the most powerful of the banditti chiefs, who had plundered the citizens during the night-attack, and set his authority at de-

fiance, coming to him at the head of his regiment, he had him secured. in spite of their formidable protection, and sent him to prison. He was afterwards condemned and executed. He confessed (under torture) a design on the Duke of Guise's life, and innumerable crimes besides, incident to his lawless profession.

Another action of the Duke, following on this failure, is of a much more doubtful complexion. He arrested three of the officers of the army of Aversa, Father Capecio, his own confessor, and the unfortunate Comte de Modene. The three first were executed, and the Comte de Modene was thrown into a dungeon, to reflect at leisure on the bad consequences of preaching to the ears of princes upon disagreeable texts. It would appear that his real crime in the Duke's eyes was the separate and independent influence which the Count had acquired with the army lying at Aversa, the officers and soldiers of which began to think that "Sempronius was as good a man as Cato." But in his Memoirs (as we have already said), he acquits his unfortunate Mentor of any other crime than suffering himself to be easily imposed on by his inferior officers. The Duke, therefore, was so far from thinking of putting him to death, that he meditated sending him to France in safety, when fate precipitated his own fall.

The Spaniards had maintained their garrisons in the three castles of Naples for eight months, suffering great privation, repelling repeated assaults, waiting with national patience and obstinacy till the hour of triumph and vengeance should arrive. Their position respecting the city of Naples resembled that of the bird and the rattlesnake. Without much effort, great supplies, or any of the exertions by which kingdoms are won and lost, they waited with composure till the experience of the evils of misgovernment and uncertainty had reconciled the minds of the people to the Spanish sway, and induced them to desire its restoration even with all its exactions, as preferable to the continuance of a state of bloodshed, battle, and tumult. The experiment of the Duke of Guise had totally failed, unless in so far as he himself, by his own personal exertions,

"In spite of spite, alone upheld the day."

But the French had abandoned him—the Neapolitan nobles would not join with him, though they suffered him to flatter himself with the idea that they would do so; the *Black Cloaks*, or better class of citizens, saw that his power rested on no sure foundation, and besides were secretly attached to the Spanish sway, as being the most durable and best supported. Of the common people, many were weary of the hardships of war, others were impatient that they no longer enjoyed the advantages of riot and pillage; so that the Duke of Guise was literally secure of no party, save that of which the popular inconstancy

gave him momentary possession, when, by some noble or courageous action, he attracted their plaudits, which, like bubbles on water, sunk with the agitation that gave them birth. The unfortunate prince had no counsellors of sagacity and integrity, hardly any regular troops which could or would observe discipline; his best soldiers were banditti, his best officers their chiefs, men stained with every crime, and especially interested in the continuance of disturbances which every honest man was desirous of seeing put an end to.

The Spaniards, we have said, looked on with a patience resembling apathy till the popular fury decreased. But the Duke of Arcos had made himself so very obnoxious to the people of Naples, that in January, 1648, the Collateral Council had, with the Duke's own consent, judged it prudent to remove him from his situation of viceroy, and appoint Don Juan of Austria in his stead. This prince, however, who was only eighteen years of age, was considered by the court of Spain, too young and inexperienced to direct in such critical circumstances; the Conde d'Oñata therefore, a wise and prudent statesman, then ambassador at Rome, received a commission to supersede him, and his arrival at the Castle of St. Elmo on the 2nd of March was looked upon as the sign of a speedy reconciliation between Naples and the Spanish government.—Another ominous circumstance for the power of the Duke of Guise was, that although he had defeated his antagonist Gennaro in council, and had him more than once apparently at his mercy, yet he was unable to deprive him of the Tower of the Carmelites, that strong post garrisoned with his own satellites, and in which the Duke, at his first arrival, had shared the *noctes cœnæque delum*, already commemorated. In daily terror of his life, Gennaro already would have been content to surrender to the Spaniards, and no doubt kept up intelligence with them. This, indeed, was the case of most of the Neapolitan leaders; Augustino Mollo, the agent of the *Black Cloaks*, and much trusted by the Duke, is, by the Comte de Modene, positively stated to have held such communication, and at last even Vincenzo Andrea, the most staunch partizan of the republic, relapsed into the same interest.

The Duke of Guise was not himself left unattempted by such means as bewilder the brave and wise. He tells us, indeed, of his resisting the temptations thrown in his way by the introduction in public of a most beautiful young woman, who afterwards offered a more private rendezvous, which he declined with more prudence than gallantry. His policy was not always so vigilant, if we may believe Guy Patin, who, after comparing him to an empiric who has made great cures, tells us, he lost all at Naples, in order to keep a rendezvous with a lady who sold him to the Spaniards. "After such a piece of policy," adds Patin, "he need not play the braggart too much."\*

\* Naudæana et Patiniana.—Paris, 1701, p. 112. Patiniana.

This is, perhaps, too severe. The man who could form and execute such great schemes with such small means, and at such great personal risk, is not to be termed a braggart. But the Duke of Guise must be allowed to have viewed with too sanguine hopes the few chances in his own favour, afforded by the desperate game he played. He should have had a more clear and distinct understanding with the French government, respecting the nature of the undertaking, and the amount of the stipulated succours. Whether it was politic in France to leave him to himself, is a different question. It would have been a master-stroke of Mazarin's policy, if he could have separated Naples from Spain, whether he could or not annex it to France; the first point being gained, the other might have been left to the chance of events, and would probably have taken place. But when the disappointment concerning the French troops was ascertained and indubitable, the edifice of Guise's power, being a mere temporary structure, showy indeed in appearance, but daubed with untempered mortar, was sure to fall into ruins on the slightest force being applied to it.

The Duke himself gives us an extraordinary account of the warning he received of his impending fate. On the 2nd of April, as soon as he awoke, he was informed that Cucurullo, a celebrated Italian astrologer, desired to speak with him. Being instantly admitted, this man stated that his object was to obtain a passport and permission to leave Naples, as he had ascertained by consulting the stars, that fortune, which had been hitherto favourable to the Duke, had now turned to the side of the Spaniards; anticipating disturbances, therefore, and anxious to leave a place where he could no longer pursue his studies in tranquillity, he wished to depart forthwith. The astrologer, who had drawn the Duke's horoscope, informed him of the *data* on which his predictions were grounded; and the Duke very learnedly attempted to prove to him that the danger was passed, and that he had nothing more to fear. Cucurullo, however, confident in his art, assured him that within eight days he would be a prisoner, and offered to wager everything he possessed in proof of the certainty of his prediction. The Duke gave him the passport he demanded, and dismissed him.

Naples never seemed more completely in the Duke's power than at the period he was about to lose it for ever. He had resolved to make an expedition against the little island of Nisita, opposite to Pausilippo, where the Spaniards had established themselves. In the midst of a sharp skirmish, a note reached him from Augustino Mollo: "Naples is worth more than a wretched shoal—Return. The city will be presently attacked." Notwithstanding this hint, the Duke, ever eagerly intent on the matter actually before him, continued the attack of Nisita, took one battery, and waited till dawn to get possession of the islet. But ere dawn rose, his kingdom had passed from

him. The posts had been reviewed on the preceding evening, by the Duke's command, and the guards never seemed more numerous and vigilant.

On the 6th of April, 1648, a general sally was made from all the castles, headed by Don Juan of Austria, and the new viceroy, the Conde d'Oñata. Landi, one of the bravest and, as was thought, most faithful of the Duke of Guise's officers, gave the Spaniards free admission; and hardly even the semblance of opposition was offered to them in the streets, from which they had been so often repulsed. The minds of men were prepared for the alteration of government, as in a theatre for a change of scenes. Nothing was heard from the citizens in the windows, and the populace in the streets, but the cry of "Long live Spain;" and, from the raptures with which Don Juan of Austria was received, he might have been inclined with Charles II. to say, that since everybody was so rejoiced to see him, it must certainly have been his own fault that he was so long absent. Public festivals were celebrated, public rejoicings made, Gennaro rendered up his stronghold—

*Sic furor evanuit tenues populares in auras.*

After a vain attempt to enter the city, the Duke of Guise, rejecting the advice of such of his followers as recommended to him to fly to Rome by sea, resolved to throw himself into the mountains of Calabria, and renew the war. But his attendants dropped off from him, his movements were watched by the cavalry of the nobility, and many parties formed by his own banditti officers, whose cupidity was now tempted by the reward set on the Duke's head. At length he was made prisoner, but not before he had defended his personal liberty with the same gallantry he had shown in protecting his sovereignty. He was treated with respect by the Neapolitan nobles, to whom he surrendered; but when transferred to the Spaniards, was in some danger of being put to death, as acting under no established flag. Don Juan of Austria prevented this barbarity. The Duke was sent to Spain, where he remained till August 1652, more than four years, in expiation of about as many months of sovereignty. He obtained his freedom by the intercession of the Prince of Condé, then in Guienne, and in alliance with Spain, during the wars of the Fronde in France. Perhaps it was expected by the Spanish ministers, that so active and mercurial a genius might breed disturbances at Paris. Guise, however, to whom Made-moiselle de Pons had proved ungrateful and faithless, seemed more disposed to console himself for her loss by fresh gallantries, than to repair his ruined schemes of ambition by new adventures. He did make another attempt, however, upon Naples, as rash as that of Joachim Murat's last attempt on the same kingdom, but fortunately attended with less tragic consequences; this was in 1654. He made

himself master of Castellamare, but was soon obliged to give it up again.

After this, his leisure was spent in the "hot vanities" which distinguished Louis the XIV.'s court, where he held the office of grand chamberlain. In the celebrated Carousel of 1662, he distinguished himself particularly; and indeed his parts, perhaps, better fitted him for the dazzling and splendid, than the great and substantial affairs of life. As the Prince of Condé and the Duke of Guise caracoled together along the Place de Carousel—"There they go together," said Cardinal du Retz, "the heroes of history and romance." The Duke of Guise died in 1664, the last who bore that formidable name, the sound of which had so often shaken the throne of France.

## LIFE AND WORKS OF JOHN HOME.

THE memory of Mr. Home, as an author, depends, in England, almost entirely upon his celebrated tragedy of *Douglas*, which not only retains the most indisputable possession of the stage, but produces a stronger effect on the feelings of the audience, when the parts of Douglas and Lady Randolph are well filled, than almost any tragedy since the days of Otway. There may be something of chance in having hit upon a plot of such general interest, and no author has been more fortunate in seeing the creatures of his imagination personified by the first performers which England could produce. But it is certain, that to be a favourite with those whose business it is to please the public, a tragedy must possess, in a peculiar degree, the means of displaying their powers to advantage; and it is equally clear, that the subject of *Douglas*, however felicitous in itself, was well suited to the talents of the writer, who treated it so as to enable them to accomplish a powerful effect on the feelings of successive generations of men.

It must be interesting, therefore, to the public, to know the history and character of that rarest of all writers in the present age—a successful tragic author; by which we understand, one whose piece has not only received ephemeral success, but has established itself on the stage as one of the best acting plays in the language. There is also much of interest about Home himself, as his character is drawn, and his habits described, in the essay prefixed to these volumes, by the venerable author of the *Man of Feeling*, who, himself very far advanced in life,\* still cherishes the love of letters, and condescends to please at once and instruct those of the present day, who are attached to such pursuits, by placing before them a lively picture of those predecessors at whose feet he was brought up.

Neither is it only to Scotland that these annals are interesting. There were men of literature in Edinburgh before she was renowned for romances, reviews, and magazines—

\* Henry Mackenzie—he died, 1831 in his 86th year. The *Life and Works of the Author of Douglas*, edited by the venerable Henry Mackenzie, appeared in 3 vols. 8vo, in 1824; and this article in the *Quarterly Review* for June, 1827.

“*Vixerunt fortes ante Agamemnona;*”

and a single glance at the authors and men of science who dignified the last generation, will serve to show that, in those days, there were giants in the North. The names of Hume, Robertson, Fergusson, stand high in the list of British historians. Adam Smith was the father of the economical system in Britain, and his standard work will long continue the text-book of that science. Dr. Black, as a chemist, opened that path of discovery which has since been prosecuted with such success. Of metaphysicians, Scotland boasted, perhaps, but too many : to Hume and Fergusson we must add Reid, and, though younger, yet of the same school, Mr. Dugald Stewart. In natural philosophy, Scotland could present Professor Robison, James Watt, whose inventions have led the way to the triumphs of human skill over the elements, and Clerk, of Eldin, who taught the British seaman the road to assured conquest. Others we could mention ; but these form a phalanx, whose reputation was neither confined to this narrow, poor, and rugged native country, nor to England and the British dominions, but known and respected wherever learning, philosophy, and science were honoured.

It is to this distinguished circle, or, at least, to the greater part of its members, that Mr. Mackenzie introduces his readers ; and they must indeed be void of curiosity who do not desire to know something more of such men than can be found in their works, and especially when the communication is made by a contemporary so well entitled to ask, and so well qualified to command, attention. We will endeavour, in the first place, to give some account of Mr. Home's life and times, as we find them detailed by their excellent biographer, and afterwards more briefly advert to his character as an author.

Mr. John Home was the son of Mr. Alexander Home, town-clerk of Leith. His grandfather was a son of Mr. Home, of Floss, a lineal descendant of Sir James Home, of Coldingknowes, ancestor of the present Earl of Home. The poet, as is natural to a man of imagination, was tenacious of being descended from a family of rank, whose representatives were formerly possessed of power scarcely inferior to that of the great Douglasses, and well-nigh as fatal both to the crown and to themselves. We have seen a copy of verses addressed by Home to Lady Kinloch, of Gilmerton, in which he contrasts his actual situation with his ancient descent. They begin nearly thus,—for it must be noticed we quote from memory :

“*Sprung from the ancient nobles of the land,  
Upon the ladder's lowest round I stand :*”

and the general tone and spirit are those of one who feels himself by birth and spirit placed above a situation of dependence to which for the time he was condemned. The same family pride glances out



in our author's History of the Rebellion of 1745, in the following passage :

"At Dunbar the Earl of Home joined Sir John Cope. He was then an officer in the Guards, and thought it a duty to offer his service, when the king's troops were in the field. He came to Dunbar, attended by one or two servants. There were not wanting persons upon this occasion to make their remarks, and observe the mighty change which little more than a century had produced in Scotland.

"It was known to everybody, who knew anything of the history of their country, that the ancestors of this noble lord (once the most powerful peers in the south of Scotland) could at a short warning have raised in their own territories a body of men, whose approach that Highland army, which had got possession of the capital of Scotland (and was preparing to fight the whole military force in that kingdom) would not have dared to wait."—Vol. iii., pp. 76, 77.

This love or pride of family was the source of another peculiarity in Mr. Home. Aristotle mentions the mispronouncing of a man's name as one of the most disagreeable of insults ; and nobody, we believe, is very fond of having his name misspelled ; but Home was peculiarly sensible on this point. The word is uniformly, in Scotland, pronounced *Hume*, and in ancient documents we have seen it written, *Heume*, *Hewme*, and *Hoome* ; but the principal branch of the family have long used the present orthography of *Home*. To *Home* the poet rigidly stuck fast and firm ; and *Home* he on all occasions defended as the only legitimate shape, to the great entertainment of his friend David (the historian), whose branch of the family (that of Ninewells) had, for some or for no reason, preferred the orthography of *Hume*, to which the philosopher, though caring, as may be supposed, very little about the matter, naturally adhered. On one occasion, when the poet was high in assertion on this important subject, the historian proposed to settle the question by casting dice which should adopt the other's mode of spelling their name :

"'Nay,' says John, 'this is a most extraordinary proposal indeed, Mr. Philosopher—for if you lose, you take your own name, and if I lose, I take another man's name.'"—Vol. i., p. 164.

Before we leave this subject, we may mention to our readers, that the family pride which is often among the Scotch found descending to those who are in such humble situations as to render it ridiculous, has, perhaps, more of worldly prudence in it than might at first be suspected. A Clifford, or a Percy, reduced in circumstances, feels a claim of long descent unsuitable to his condition, unavailing in assisting his views in life, and ridiculous as contrasted with them. He therefore sinks, and endeavours to forget, pretensions which his son or grandson altogether loses sight of. On the contrary, the system of entails in

Scotland, their extent, and their perpetual endurance, naturally recommend to a Home, or a Douglas, to preserve an account of his genealogy, in case of some event occurring which may make him *heir of tailzie* to a good estate. And while this attention to pedigree may conduce to some contingent advantage, it influences naturally the feelings of the young *Hidalgos* upon whom it is inculcated, and who soon learn to prize the *genus et proavos*, as being flattering to their vanity, as well as what may, by possibility, tend to advance their fortune. A certain number of calculable chances would have made the author of Douglas the Earl of Home; and, indeed, an epidemic among the Scottish peerage (which Heaven forefend!) would make wild changes when the great roll is next called in Holyrood. Like every thing, in short, in this motley world, the family pride of the north country has its effects of good and of evil. It often leads to a degree of care being bestowed on the education of these juvenile *gentillatres*, which might otherwise have been neglected; and forms, at the same time, an excitement to honourable struggles for independence, and to manly resolutions of adopting the behaviour and sentiments of men of honour, though fortune has denied the means of supporting the figure of gentlemen otherwise. On the other hand, and with less happy dispositions, it sometimes occasions an incongruous alliance of pride and poverty, and exhibits the national character in a point of view equally arrogant and ridiculous.

To return to our subject:—John Home, educated for the Scots Presbyterian Church, soon distinguished himself among his contemporaries at college, and ranked with Robertson, Hugh Blair, Adam Ferguson, who attended the same seminary, and others mentioned by Mr. Mackenzie, distinguished by their sense, learning, and talents, although they did not attain, or contend for, literary celebrity. Our author obtained his license to preach the gospel, as a probationer for the ministry (which is equivalent to taking deacon's orders in England), in the eventful year, emphatically distinguished in Scotland as the FORTY-FIVE. The character of the times, however, furnished our young poet with employment more congenial to his temper than the peaceful and retired duties of the profession he had chosen. "The land was burning;" the young Chevalier had landed in the Highlands, with only seven followers, and came to try a desperate cast for the crown which his ancestors had lost. The character of Home at this period is thus described by his elegant biographer:

"His temper was of that warm susceptible kind which is caught with the heroic and the tender, and which is more fitted to delight in the world of sentiment than to succeed in the bustle of ordinary life. This is a disposition of mind well suited to the poetical character; and, accordingly, all his earliest companions agree that Mr. Home was from his childhood delighted with the lofty and heroic ideas which em-

body themselves in the description or narrative of poetry. One of them, nearly a coeval of Mr. Home's, Dr. A. Ferguson, says in a letter to me, that Mr. Home's favourite model of a character, on which, indeed, his own was formed, was that of young Norval, in his tragedy of Douglas, one endowed with chivalrous valour and romantic generosity, eager for glory beyond every other object, and, in the contemplation of future fame, entirely regardless of the present objects of interest or ambition."—Vol. i., pp. 6, 7.

For such a character as this to sit inactive when arms were clashing around him, was impossible. John Home's profession as a Presbyterian clergyman, his political opinions, and those of his family, decided the cause which he was to espouse, and he became one of the most active and eager members of a corps of volunteers, formed for the purpose of defending Edinburgh against the expected assault of the Highlanders. Under less strong influence of education and profession, which was indeed irresistible, it is possible he might have made a less happy option; for the feeling, the adventure, the romance, the poetry, all that was likely to interest the imagination of a youthful poet,—all, in short, save the common sense, prudence, and sound reason of the national dispute,—must be allowed to have lain on the side of the Jacobites. Indeed, although mortally engaged against them, Mr. Home could not, in the latter part of his life, refrain from tears when mentioning the gallantry and misfortunes of some of the unfortunate leaders in the Highland army; and we have ourselves seen his feelings and principles divide him strangely when he came to speak upon such topics.

The body of the corps of volunteers, with which Mr. Home was associated, consisted of about from four to five hundred; many, doubtless, were gallant young men, students from the university and so forth—but by far the greater part were citizens, at an age unfit to take up arms, without previous habit and experience. They had religious zeal and political enthusiasm to animate them; but these, though they make a prodigious addition to the effect of discipline, cannot supply its place. Cromwell's enthusiasts beat all the nobility and gentry of England; but the same class of men, not having the advantage of similar training, fled at Bothwell Bridge, without even waiting to see their enemy. Many of the Edinburgh corps were, moreover, *Oneyers* and *Moneyers*, as Falstaff says, men whose words upon 'Change would go much farther than their blows in battle. Most had shops to be plundered, houses to be burned, children to be brained with Lochaber axes, and wives, daughters, and favourite handmaidens to be treated according to the rules of war. When, therefore, it was proposed to the volunteers to march out of the city together with what was called the *Edinburgh Regiment*,—a very indifferent body of men, who had been levied and em-

bodied for the nonce,—and supported by two regular regiments of dragoons, called Gardiner's and Hamilton's, which were expected to bear the brunt of the battle,—we are informed by a contemporary author,\* that—

“The provost had no power to order the volunteers out of town : he only *consented* that as many as pleased should be allowed to march out. But it seems they had as little inclination to go as he had power to order them. A few of them made a faint effort, but 'tis said, met with opposition from some of the *zealously affected*, who represented to them the infinite value of their lives in comparison of those ruffians, the Highlanders :—this opposition they were never able to overcome.”

The arrangement, however, was made ; the dragoons were paraded on the *High Street*, and the fire-bell rang for the volunteers to assemble, a signal for which the provost was afterwards highly censured, perhaps because, instead of rousing the hearts of the volunteers like the sound of a trumpet, it rather reminded them of a passing-knell. They did assemble, however ; but their relations (according to our poet's account) assembled also, mixed in their ranks, and while the men reasoned and endeavoured to persuade their friends from so rash an adventure, the women expostulated, complained, and wept, embracing their husbands, sons, and brothers, and by the force of their tears and entreaties, melting down the fervour of their resolutions. At last the battalion was ordered to move towards *the Westport*, when, behold the officers complained that their men would not follow, while the men declared that their officers would not lead the way. The bravest hearts were cast down by the general consternation. We remember an instance of a stout Whig and a very worthy man, a writing-master by occupation, who had ensconced his bosom beneath a professional cuirass, consisting of two quires of long foolscap writing-paper ; and, doubtful that even this defence might be unable to protect his valiant heart from the claymores, amongst which its repulses might carry him, had written on the outside, in his best flourish, “This is the body of J—M— ; pray give it Christian burial.” Even this hero, prepared as one practised how to die, could not find it in his heart to accompany the devoted battalion farther than the door of his own house, which stood conveniently open about the head of *the Lawn Market*. The descent of *the Bow* presented localities and facilities equally convenient for desertion ; and the pamphleteer, whom we have already quoted, assures us that a friend of his, who had made a poetical description of the march of the volunteers from the Lawn Market to the Westport, when they went out, or, more properly, seemed to be about

\* We quote from a pamphlet entitled *A True Account of the Behaviour and Conduct of Archibald Stewart, Esq., late Lord Provost of Edinburgh, in a Letter to a Friend*; London, 1748 ; a production which there is strong evidence, both external and internal, for attributing to the pen of David Hume.

to go out, to meet the ruthless rebels, had invented a very magnificent simile to illustrate his subject. "He compared it to the course of the Rhine, which, rolling pompously its waves through fertile fields, instead of augmenting in its course, is continually drawn off by a thousand canals, and at last becomes a small rivulet, which loses itself in the sands before it reaches the ocean."

The behaviour of the doughty dragoons themselves, "whose business it was to die," was even less edifying than that of the citizen volunteers, whose business it was, as Fluellen says to Pistol, "to live and eat their victuals;" and though it leads us something off our course, yet, as Mr. Home's history of the *forty-five* forms a part of the work now before us, the following lively description (from the pen, it is believed, of his distinguished friend David) will not be altogether impertinent to the subject, and may probably amuse the reader. After remarking that cavalry ought to have the same advantage over irregular infantry, which veteran infantry possess over cavalry, and that particularly in the case of Highlanders, whom they encounter with their own weapon, the broadsword, and who neither formed platoons, nor had bayonets, or any other long weapon, to withstand a charge—after noticing, moreover, that if it were too sanguine to expect a victory, Brigadier Fowke, who commanded two regiments of cavalry, might, at least, have made a leisurely and regular retreat, though he had advanced within a musket-shot of his enemy, before a column that could not turn out five mounted horsemen, he proceeds thus:—

"Before the rebels came within sight of the King's forces, before they came within three miles' distance of them, orders were issued to the dragoons to wheel, which they immediately did with the greatest order and regularity imaginable. As it is known that nothing is more beautiful than the evolutions and movements of cavalry, the spectators stood in expectation what fine warlike manœuvre they might terminate in; when new orders were immediately issued to retreat, they immediately obeyed and began to march in the usual pace of cavalry. Orders were repeated every furlong to quicken their pace, and both precept and example concurring, they quickened it so well that, before they reached Edinburgh, they had quickened it to a pretty smart gallop. They passed in inexpressible hurry and confusion through the narrow lanes at Barefoot's parks, in the sight of all the north part of the town, to the infinite joy of the disaffected, and equal grief and consternation of all the other inhabitants. They rushed like a torrent down to Leith, where they endeavoured to draw breath; but some unlucky boy (I suppose a Jacobite in his heart) calling to them that the Highlanders were approaching, they immediately took to their heels again, and galloped to Prestonpans, about six miles farther. There, in a literal sense, *timor addidit alas*, their fear added wings, I mean to the rebels. For other

wise, they could not possibly have imagined that these formidable enemies could be within several miles of them. But at Prestonpans the same alarm was repeated. The Philistines be upon thee, Samson ! They galloped to North Berwick, and being now about twenty miles on the other side of Edinburgh, they thought they might safely dismount from their horses and look out for victuals. Accordingly, like the ancient Grecian heroes, each began to kill and dress his provisions : *egit amor dapis atque pugnae* ; they were actuated by the desire of supper and of battle. The sheep and turkeys of North Berwick paid for this warlike disposition. But behold the uncertainty of human happiness ! When the mutton was just ready to be put upon the table, they heard, or thought they heard, the same cry of the Highlanders. Their fear proved stronger than their hunger, they again got on horseback, but were informed time enough of the falseness of the alarm to prevent the spoiling of their meal. By such rudiments as these the dragoons were instructed, till at last they became so perfect at their lesson, that at the battle of Preston they could practise it of themselves, though even there the same good example was not wanting. I have seen an Italian opera, called *Cesare in Egitto*, or Cæsar in Egypt, where, in the first scene, Cæsar is introduced in a great hurry, giving orders to his soldiers, *fugge, fugge, allo scampo*—fly, fly, to your heels. This is a proof that the commander at the Coltbridge is not the first hero that gave such orders to his troops.\*

While the regular troops were thus in hasty retreat, John Home and some few others of his more zealous brethren among the volunteers, were trying to overcome apprehensions in the corps at large, similar to those which drove the dragoons eastward, but which had the contrary effect of detaining the citizens within the circuit of their walls. Poets, being of "imagination all compact," are supposed to be more accessible than other men to the passion of fear ; but there are numerous exceptions, and one scarcely wonders that the author of *Douglas* should have resembled, in that part of his character, the father of Grecian tragedy, thus described by Home's friend, Collins, in the *Ode to Fear* :—

" Yet he the bard, who first invoked thy name,  
Disdain'd at Marathon thy power to feel,  
For not alone he nursed the poet's flame,  
But raised from virtue's hand the patriot's steel."

In spite, however, of exhortation and example, the volunteers gave up their arms, and it only remained for Home, and the few who retained spirit enough for such an enterprise, to sally out and unite themselves with Sir John Cope, who had, as the song says, just—

\* Account of the Behaviour, &c., of Archibald Stewart, Esq.

“landed at Dunbar  
Right early in the morning.”

John Home determined, however, to carry some intelligence, at least, which might be useful, and, for this purpose, he ventured to visit the bivouac of Prince Charles's army, which was in what is called the King's park, in a hollow, lying betwixt the two hills—Arthur's Seat and Salisbury Crags. Food had just been served out, and, as they were sitting in ranks on the ground, he had an opportunity of counting this handful of half-armed mutineers, who came to overturn an established government, and to change the destinies of a mighty empire. They did not exceed two thousand men; and Home's description of their appearance, as he gave it to Sir John Cope, is no unfavourable example of his prose style of composition.

“The general asked what sort of appearance they made, and how they were armed. The volunteer (*i. e.* Home himself) answered, that most of them seemed to be strong, active, and hardy men: that many of them were of a very ordinary size, and, if clothed like Low-country men, would (in his opinion) appear inferior to the King's troops; but the Highland garb favoured them much, as it showed their naked limbs, which were strong and muscular: that their stern countenances, and bushy uncombed hair, gave them a fierce, barbarous, and imposing aspect. As to their arms, he said that they had no cannon or artillery of any sort, but one small iron gun which he had seen without a carriage, lying upon a cart, drawn by a little Highland horse; that about 1400 or 1500 of them were armed with firelocks and broadswords; that their firelocks were not similar nor uniform, but of all sorts and sizes, muskets, fusees, and fowling-pieces; that some of the rest had firelocks without swords, and some of them swords without firelocks; that many of their swords were not Highland broadswords, but French; that a company or two (about 100 men) had each of them in his hand the shaft of a pitchfork, with the blade of a scythe fastened to it, somewhat like the weapon called the Lochaber axe, which the town-guard soldiers carry; but all of them, he added, would be soon provided with fire-locks, as the arms belonging to the Trained Bands of Edinburgh had fallen into their hands. Sir John Cope dismissed the volunteer, with many compliments for bringing him such certain and accurate intelligence.”—Vol. iii., pp. 75, 76.

Of the zealous services of the few but faithful volunteers who did leave Edinburgh, Mr. Home gives us a slight account; but we cannot help rendering it a little more particular, having heard it more than once from the lips of a man of equal worth and humour, and a particular intimate of the author of *Douglas*. We firmly believe, though we cannot say it with absolute certainty, that Mr. Home was of the party, now reduced to five or six, whose proceedings we are about to describe.

We will not be quite so particular as our venerable informer, in describing the marchings and countermarchings which the determined squad made through East Lothian, calling at every alehouse of reputation, to drink success to the Protestant cause, and endeavouring to collect news of Sir John Cope and his army. Indeed it would be rather tedious, as our authority, though very entertaining, was something minute in the narrative, and spared us not a single *rizard* had-dock, which went to recruit their bodily strength, or a single chopin of twopenny, or mutchkin of brandy, which served to support their manly spirit for the approaching conflict. At length, they joined Sir John Cope and offered their service. Poor Johnnie, the object of much satire and ridicule, was, in fact, by no means either a coward or a bad soldier, or even a contemptible general upon ordinary occasions. He was a pudding-headed, thick-brained sort of person, who could act well enough in circumstances with which he was conversant, especially as he was perfectly acquainted with the routine of his profession, and had been often engaged in action, without ever, until the fatal field of Preston, having shown sense enough to run away. On the present occasion, he was, as sportsmen say, at fault. He well knew that the high road from Edinburgh to the south lies along the coast, and it seems never to have occurred to him that it was possible the Highlanders might choose, even by preference, to cross the country and occupy the heights, at the bottom of which the public road takes its course, and thus have him and his army in so far at their mercy, that they might avoid, or bring on battle, at their sole pleasure. On the contrary, Sir John trusted that their Highland courtesy would induce them, if they moved from Edinburgh, to come by the very road by which he was advancing towards that city, and thus meet him on equal terms. Under this impression, the general sent two of the volunteers, who chanced to be mounted, and knew the country, to observe the coast road, especially towards Musselburgh. They rode on their exploratory expedition, and, coming to that village, which is about six miles from Edinburgh, avoided the bridge, to escape detection, and crossed the Esk, it being then low water, at a place nigh its junction with the sea. Unluckily there was, at the opposite side, a snug, thatched tavern, kept by a cleanly old woman called Lucky F—, who was eminent for the excellence of her oysters and sherry. The patrol were both *bon vivants*—one of them, whom we remember in the situation of a senator, as it is called, of the college of justice, was unusually so, and a gay, witty, agreeable companion besides. Luckie's sign, and the heap of oyster-shells deposited near her door, proved as great a temptation to this vigilant forlorn-hope as the wine-house to the Abbess of Andouillet's muleteer. They had scarcely got settled at some right *pandores*, with a bottle of sherry as an accompaniment, when, as some



Jacobite devil would have it, an unlucky North Country lad, a writer's (*i. e.* attorney's) apprentice who had given his indentures the slip, and taken the white cockade, chanced to pass by on his errand to join Prince Charlie. He saw the two volunteers through the window, knew them, and guessed their business; he saw the tide would make it impossible for them to return along the sands as they had come. He, therefore, placed himself in ambush upon the steep, narrow, impracticable bridge, which was then, and for many years afterwards, the only place of crossing the Esk: "and how he contrived it," our narrator used to proceed, "I never could learn; but the courage and assurance of the province from which he came are proverbial. In short, the Norland whipper-snapper surrounded and made prisoners of my two poor friends, before they could draw a trigger." Here our excellent friend was apt to make a pause, and hurry to the scene of slaughter which the field exhibited in the afternoon. A little cross-examination, however, easily brought out the termination of the campaign, so far as concerned our faithful remnant of volunteers now reduced to five or six.

When the party which marched with Cope's army had arrived at the spot where the battle took place on the next morning, it was natural that they should quarter themselves in the house of the father of our narrator (a clergyman), which was in the immediate vicinity of the destined field. Our friend, as was no less natural, recollected a small scantling of madeira, and it was judged prudent to anticipate the order of the next day by drinking it up themselves. They then went to bed, desiring the maid-servant to call them at sunrise, or how much sooner the battle should begin. But, alas! the first edge of the sun's disk that rose above the ocean saw both the beginning and the end of the fray, and the volunteers had just dreamed that they heard a cannon-shot or two, when the mother of our friend burst into his room, imploring him to hide his arms, for the King's army was totally routed. "We bustled up in a hurry," said our friend, "scarcely thinking the tidings possible; when, from the window, I could see the dragoons, whose nerves had never recovered the Canter of Coltbrigg, as that retreat was called, in full route, pursued by the whole cavalry of the Highland army, consisting of Lord Elcho, Sir Peter Threipland, and two or three gentlemen, with their grooms." "In short," as our friend expressed himself, "the dragoons and Highlanders divided the honours of the day, and on that occasion, at least, the race *was* to the swift, and the battle to the strong." The sleepers, thus unpleasantly alarmed, were now obliged to conceal or surrender their arms, and employ what remained of their zeal in attending to the wounded, who were brought into the clergyman's house in great numbers, dreadfully mangled by the broad-swords. One of the volunteers (for *two* of the corps actually were in

battle, after all the impediments which oysters, sherry, and old madeira had thrown in their way) received thirty wounds, yet recovered. His name was Myrie, a Creolian by birth, and a student of medicine at the college of Edinburgh. His comrade, Campbell, escaped by speed of horse. Hence, the verses on the volunteers, in the satiric ballad which old Skirving (father of Skirving the artist) wrote upon this memorable conflict:—

“Of a’ the gang nane stood the bane  
But twa, and ane was ta’en, man,  
For Campbell rade, but Myrie staid,  
And sure he paid the kain,\* man.  
Fell skelps he got, was worse than shot,  
From the sharp-edged claymore, man.”

If the author of *Douglas* was, as we believe, one of the party of sleepers thus unpleasantly awakened, the unexpected issue of the combat, and the ghastly spectacle of the wounded, did not prevent him from again engaging—and that scarcely under more fortunate auspices—in the same service

The town of Glasgow raised a body of volunteers, in which Home obtained the situation of lieutenant. This regiment joined General Hawley on the 13th of January, 1746, and our author was present in the action near Falkirk, which seems to have been as confused an affair as can well be imagined. Hawley had not a better head, and certainly a much worse heart, than Sir John Cope, who was a humane, good-tempered man. The new general ridiculed severely the conduct of his predecessor, and remembering that he had seen, in 1715, the left wing of the Highlanders broken by a charge of the Duke of Argyle’s horse, which came upon them across a morass, he resolved to manœuvre in the same manner. He forgot, however, a material circumstance—that the morass at Sheriffmuir was hard frozen, which made some difference in favour of the cavalry. Hawley’s manœuvre, as commanded and executed, plunged a great part of his dragoons up to the saddle-laps in a bog, where the Highlanders cut them to pieces with so little trouble, that, as one of the performers assured us, the feat was as easy as slicing *baacon*. The gallantry of some of the English regiments beat off the Highland charge on another point, and, amid a tempest of wind and rain which has seldom equalled, the field presented the singular prospect of two armies, flying different ways at the same moment. The King’s troops, however, ran fastest and farthest, and were the last to recover their courage; indeed, they retreated that night to Falkirk, leaving their guns, burning their tents, and striking a new panic into the British nation, which was but just recovering from the flutter excited by what, in olden times, would have been called the Raid of Derby. In the drawing-room which took place at Saint

\* Literally, “paid the rent;” equivalent to the English phrase of “paid the reckoning.”

James's on the day the news arrived, all countenances were marked with doubt and apprehension, excepting those of George the Second, the Earl of Stair, and Sir John Cope, who was radiant with joy at Hawley's discomfiture. Indeed, the idea of the two generals was so closely connected, that a noble peer of Scotland, upon the same day, addressed Sir John Cope by the title of General Hawley, to the no small amusement of those who heard the *qui pro quo*.

Mr. Home had some share in this action. The Glasgow regiment, being newly levied, was not honoured with a place in the line, though it certainly could not have behaved worse than some who held that station; they were drawn up beside some cottages on the left of the dragoons, and seem to have stood fast when the others went off. Presently afterwards General Hawley rode past them, in the midst of a disorderly crowd of horse and foot, and he himself apparently considerably discomposed; for he could give no answer to Mr. Home, who asked him for orders, and was solicitous to know whether any regiments were standing, and where they were; but, pointing to a fold for cattle, he desired the volunteers to get in there, and so rode down the hill, the confusion becoming general. After remaining where they had been imprisoned, rather than posted, and behaving with considerable spirit,\* Lieutenant Home, his captain, and a few of his men, were taken upon their retreat; they were used with little courtesy by the Highlanders, who made allowances for the opposition which they experienced from the red-coats, but could not see what interest the militia or volunteers had in the matter. Accordingly, when the prisoners, being lodged in gaol at Falkirk, and neglected in the general hurry, became clamorous for provisions—the sergeant of their guard very soberly asked them “what occasion they could possibly have for supper, since they were to be hanged in the morning.”

Their doom, however, was milder: they were imprisoned in the old castle at Doune, on the north side of the Forth, built by one of the Dukes of Albany, and their place of confinement was near the top of

\* Home, in his own History, is silent on the behaviour of the Glasgow regiment, but not so a metrical chronicler, who wrote a history of the insurrection in doggerel verse indeed, but sufficiently accurate. This author, who is, indeed, no other than Dugald Grahame, bellman of Glasgow, says that the Highlanders, having beaten the horse—

“The south side being fairly won,  
They faced north as had been done;  
When next stood, to bide the crush,  
The volunteers, who zealous,  
Kept firing close, till near surrounded,  
And by the flying horse confounded.  
They suffer'd sair into this place,  
No Highlander pitied their case:  
'You cursed militia,' they did swear,  
'What a devil did bring you here?'"

*History of the Rebellion in 1745-1746.*

that very lofty building. Nevertheless, five or six of the prisoners, Home being of the number, proposed the hazardous experiment of an attempt to escape by descending from the battlements, a height of seventy feet, by means of a rope constructed out of slips of their blankets, which they tore up for that purpose. The issue of the attempt vindicates what we have said of Home's courage and spirit : we will, therefore, give it in his own words :—

“When every thing was adjusted, they went up to the battlements, fastened the rope, and about one o'clock in the morning began to descend. The two officers, with Robert Douglas, and one of the men taken up as spies, got down very well ; but the fifth man, one of the spies, who was very tall and big, coming down in a hurry, the rope broke with him just as his feet touched the ground. The lieutenant (Home himself), standing by the wall of the castle, called to the volunteer, whose turn it was to come down next, not to attempt it ; for that twenty or thirty feet were broken off from the rope. Notwithstanding this warning, which he heard distinctly, he put himself upon the rope, and coming down as far as it lasted, let go his hold : his friend Douglas and the lieutenant (who were both of them above the middle size), as soon as they saw him upon the rope (for it was moonlight) put themselves under him, to break his fall, which in part they did ; but falling from so great a height, he brought them both to the ground, dislocated one of his ancles, and broke several of his ribs. In this extremity the lieutenant raised him from the ground, and taking him upon his back, for he was slender and not very tall, carried him towards the road which led to Alloa. When the lieutenant was not able to go any further with his burden, other two of the company, holding each of them one of Mr. Barrow's arms, helped him to hop along upon one leg. In this manner they went on very slowly, a mile or so ; but thinking that, at the rate they proceeded, they would certainly be overtaken, they resolved to call at the first house they should come to. When they came to a house, they found a friend ; for the landlord, who rented a small farm, was a Whig, and as soon as he knew who they were, ordered one of his sons to bring a horse from the stable, take the lame gentleman behind him, and go as far as his assistance was necessary. Thus equipped, they went on by Alloa to Tullyallan, a village near the sea, where they hired a boat to carry them off to the Vulture sloop-of-war, which was lying at anchor in the Frith of Forth. Captain Falconer of the Vulture received them very kindly, and gave them his barge to carry them to Queensferry.”—Vol. iii., pp. 172—174.

The volunteer who suffered on this occasion was Thomas Barrow. This is the mutual friend of Home and Collins, “the cordial youth” referred to in the ode on the Highland superstitions, addressed by the latter to the former poet. When Mr. Home's connexion with the great

enabled him to serve his friends, Barrow was not forgotten ; and Barrow repaid the obligation by making Home acquainted with Collins, who, in consequence, delighted with the legends of mystery which Home repeated to him, composed that beautiful ode, which is certainly one of the most pleasing and poetical of his compositions.

We are now done with Mr. Home's military exploits and hazards, on which we have, perhaps, dwelt too long, though it must be remembered that our author was the historiographer of that period. His studies were resumed, "and chiefly," says his biographer, "were such as to lead his mind to that lofty and martial sentiment, the swell of which is one of the nurses of poetry.

"Amidst his classical and poetical reading, however, Mr. Home occupied himself not only in the studies of ethics and divinity, but also in the composition of sermons. But even at these moments, it would seem as if his mind was constrained, not changed, from its favourite bent ; for, on the backs or blank interstices of the papers containing some of his earliest composed sermons, there are passages of poetry, written in a more or less perfect state, as the inspiration or leisure of the moment prompted or allowed."—Vol. i., p. 33.

Mr. Home was appointed in the year 1746 minister of Athelstoneford, in East Lothian, a locality which he has not forgotten in his celebrated tragedy, having fixed the apprehended descent of the Danes

"near to that place where the sea-rock immense,  
Amazing Bass, looks o'er a fertile land."

Mr. Home's leisure, although his clerical duties were not only regularly but strictly attended to, naturally induced him to indulge his poetical taste, and without, perhaps, suspecting the scandal the choice might occasion, to direct it towards dramatic composition. Admiring Plutarch, as that biographer must be admired by all who have the least pretension to poetical imagination, and being, as Mr. Mackenzie informs us, attached, like most other young men of ardent minds, to the republican form of government, he selected from the storehouse of the old Grecian the story of Agis, without, perhaps, minutely inquiring whether the subject had enough of general interest in itself to support the dialogue through five acts, or was likely to be much improved by the ordinary receipt of a love-intrigue, awkwardly dovetailed into the general plot.

About the end of 1749 he went to London, and tendered his play to Garrick ; but the author, at that time, was an unknown Scottish clergyman, and the manager, whose interest was always best secured by distinction, patronage, or literary reputation at least, declined bringing the piece forward. Under the feelings of mortification to find neglect

"his only meed,  
(And heavy falls it on so proud a head,")

the unsuccessful tragedian made a pilgrimage to the tomb of Shakespeare, and there wrote a copy of verses, imploring the deceased bard to transmute him into a marble image, and fix him beside his monument, since he had not obtained the opportunity of fascinating the public by tragic powers resembling his own.

On Home's return to Scotland, he continued his dramatic labours under better auspices. The old ballad of Gill Morrice supplied him with a plot of simple, yet engrossing and general interest, upon which the tragedy of *Douglas* was composed, amidst the universal applause of the literary associates of the author, which circle already comprehended the first order of Edinburgh literati—Lord Elibank, David Hume, Mr. Wedderburn, Dr. Adam Ferguson, &c. A second journey to London—a second application to Garrick, met with a similar rebuff as in the case of *Agis*: the manager pronounced the play totally unfit for the stage. There might, indeed, be another reason for this rejection: Garrick was naturally partial to those pieces in which he himself could appear to advantage, and, though not more than forty years of age, he was scarcely, in 1755, the natural representative of the stripling Douglas.

The friends of the author were of a different opinion from the English manager, and determined to try the experiment of a play written by a Scotchman, and produced, for the first time, on a provincial stage—so that of Edinburgh was now to be termed. Its reception of *Douglas*, as appears from the following account by Mr. Mackenzie, was as brilliant as the author's friends, nay the author himself, could have desired:—

“Dr. Carlyle, who sometimes witnessed the rehearsals, expresses, in his Memoirs,\* his surprise and admiration at the acting of Mrs. Ward, who performed Lady Randolph. Digges was the Douglas of the piece, his supposed father was played by Hayman, and Glenalvon, by Love; actors of very considerable merit, and afterwards of established reputation on the London stage. But Mrs. Ward's beauty (for she was very beautiful) and feeling, tutored with the most zealous anxiety by the author and his friends, charmed and affected the audience as much, perhaps, as has ever been accomplished by the very superior actresses of after-times. I was then a boy, but of an age to be sometimes admitted as a sort of page to the tea-drinking parties of Edinburgh. I have a perfect recollection of the strong sensation which *Douglas* excited among its inhabitants. The men talked of the rehearsals; the ladies repeated what they had heard of the story; some had procured, as a great favour, copies of the most striking passages, which they recited at the earnest request of the company. I was present at the re-

\* Unfortunately, we believe, for the public, these Memoirs are still in MS. From what we have heard, they abound in very curious matter.

presentation ; the applause was enthusiastic ; but a better criterion of its merits was the tears of the audience, which the tender part of the drama drew forth unsparingly. ‘The town,’ says Dr. Carlyle (and I can vouch how truly), ‘was in an uproar of exultation, that a Scotchman should write a tragedy of the first rate, and that its merits were first submitted to them.’—Vol. i., pp. 37—40.

But with the voice of praise arose, in startling disunion, a loud note of censure. Betwixt the two parties which divide the Church of Scotland, one (to which it may be easily believed John Home did *not* belong) was, and in some degree still is, distinguished by a certain shade of Puritanism, which, when arising from a sincerely scrupulous conscience, and combined with a Christian charity towards those who may differ in opinion, merits, not merely pardon, but profound respect—but is not entitled to the same indulgence when it assumes to itself an intolerant character. These zealous professors, above all other men, abhorring the doctrines of Rome nominally, did not, perhaps, very far depart from them in principle, when they affirmed it was the duty of a sincere Christian to abstain from certain harmless pleasures, indifferent, nay, moral in themselves. They allowed their followers to gorge upon beef and pudding on fast-days, as well as holidays ; but dancing, music, dramatic representation, and other lighter amusements, though as harmless, when practised with moderation, as food to the palate, were sternly interdicted.

It must be, indeed, admitted that the practice of the stage had been, during the preceding century, such as gave the censors much room to argue, from the abuse, against even the use of the theatre. It is not, however, our purpose here to enter into a controversy, which has in a manner died away of itself, but which existed, at the time we treat of, in all the gall of bitterness. In such a temper of the public mind, it was not wonderful that the appearance of a tragedy, written by a Presbyterian clergyman, and attended and applauded by many of his brethren, and those of great reputation for learning and talents, should appear to many like a “waxing dim of the fine gold,”—an innovation on the strictness of principle and purity of manners esteemed essential to the Church of Scotland.

“The Presbytery of Edinburgh published a solemn admonition on the subject, beginning with expressions of deep regret at the growing irreligion of the times, particularly the neglect of the *Sabbath* ;\* but

\* “Yet at that time in Edinburgh there was much more regard to the sacredness of Sunday than now. I was then a boy, and I well remember the reverential silence of the streets, and the tip-toe kind of fear with which, when any accident prevented my attendance on church, I used to pass through them. What would the Presbytery have said now, when, in the time of public worship on a Sunday, not only are the public walks crowded, but idle and blackguard boys bawl through the streets, and splash us with their games there?—an indecency of which, though no friend to puritanical preciseness, and still less to religious persecution, I rather think the police ought to take cognizance.”—*Note by Mr. Mackenzie.*

calculated chiefly to warn all persons within their bounds, especially the young, and those who had the charge of youth, against the danger of frequenting stage-plays and theatrical entertainments, of which the Presbytery set forth the immoral and pernicious tendency, at considerable length.

"This step of the Presbytery, like all other overstrained proceedings of that nature, provoked resistance and ridicule on the part of the public. The wags poured forth parodies, epigrams, and songs. These were, in general, not remarkable for their wit or pleasantry, though some of them were the productions of young men, afterwards eminent in letters or in station."—Vol. i., p. 42.

We have a collection of these productions on our table at this moment; it must be owned that it contains more trash and nonsense than could have been expected to have been produced by a general controversy in the eighteenth century. Here follows a specimen, taken where the book chanced to open :—

"It is agreed upon, by sober pagans themselves, that play-actors are the most profligate wretches, and vilest vermin, that hell ever vomited out; that they are the filth and garbage of the earth, the scum and stain of human nature, the excrements and refuse of all mankind, the pests and plagues of human society; the debauchers of men's minds and morals; unclean beasts, idolatrous papists or atheists, and the most horrid and abandoned villains that ever the sun shone upon."

Truly these are very bitter words; the zeal of such a controversialist is like that imputed by Dryden to Jeremy Collier, which, if it had not eaten the disputants up, must be allowed to have devoured all sense of decency and good manners. Of course there were other censures, expressed in a decent and moderate tone; yet it is astonishing how many circumstances were unfairly brought in. The general accusation of a clergyman's having written the death of Lady Randolph,—a catastrophe which may be fairly imputed to insanity, produced by extreme grief,—was said to imply a vindication of suicide; and some other passages were wiredrawn in the same way to produce inferences, which no man of candour can suppose were within the thoughts of the writer. Among these instances of want of candour and misconstruction, we do not include the objections made to a solemn prayer addressed to the Deity by one of the personages in the piece. The act of adoration is highly unfitted for mimic representation, and Mr. Home's error—however remote any notion of irreverence may have been from his mind—was visited with, we think, deserved reprehension.

Upon the whole, the high Calvinistical party prevailed so far, that the author had no chance of escaping the highest censures of his Church, if not the sentence of deprivation, save by voluntarily resigning his charge. His parishioners at Athelstoneford parted with their



pastor with such regret, that, when he preached his farewell sermon, there was not a dry eye in the church. And, "at a subsequent period," says Mr. Mackenzie, "when he retired from active life, and built a house in East Lothian, near the parish where he had once been minister, his former parishioners, as Lord Haddington informed me, insisted on leading the stones for the building, and would not yield to his earnest importunity to pay them any compensation for their labour."—Vol. i., p. 34.

Home's professional friends and companions did not escape the censures of the Church, for the encouragement they had given his dramatic labours. The chief amongst these was Dr. Carlyle, for a long period clergyman at Musselburgh, whose character was as excellent as his conversation was amusing and instructive, and whose person and countenance, even at a very advanced age, were so lofty and commanding as to strike every artist with his resemblance to the Jupiter Tonans of the Pantheon. It was stated in aggravation of this reverend gentleman's crime in attending the theatre, that two rude or intoxicated young men having entered the box, and behaved uncivilly to some ladies, the doctor took the trouble of turning them out, which his great personal strength enabled him to do with little resistance or disturbance. He underwent a rebuke which did not sit very heavy on him. Similar measures of punishment were dealt out to other *play-haunters*, as those clergymen were termed who had ventured, however unfrequently, into the precincts of a theatre. But the effect on the public mind was, like all proceedings in which the punishment is disproportioned to the offence, more unfavourable to the judges than to the accused. The public, considering the whole dialogue and tendency of Mr. Home's play of *Douglas* as favourable to virtuous and honourable feeling, did not sympathize with the extreme horror expressed at what the Presbytery at Glasgow called "the *melancholy fact* that there should have been a tragedy written by a minister of the Church of Scotland;" and the ultimate consequence of the whole debate was a considerable increase of liberality on the part of the churchmen, many of whom now attend the theatre, though rarely, and when the entertainment is suited to their character; and it is to be hoped that the discussion may have produced on the other side an increased sense of decency respecting the representations on the stage. When Mrs. Siddons first acted in Edinburgh, in 1784, the General Assembly, or Convocation of the Church of Scotland, which was then sitting, had some difficulty in procuring a full attendance of its members on the nights when she performed. And wherefore should this be matter either of scandal or of censure, if the sentiments of Dr. Adam Fergusson are just, as expressed in a letter to Mr. Mackenzie, on the subject of Home's dramatic composition—

"Theatrical compositions, like every other human production, are, in the abstract, not more laudable or censurable than any other species of composition, but are either good or bad, moral or immoral, according to the management or the effect of the individual tragedy or comedy we are to see represented, or to peruse."—Vol. i., pp. 75, 76.

Driven from his own profession by the fanaticism of his brethren, Home had no difficulty, such was his extended reputation, in obtaining one in the world's eye more distinguished, which placed him contiguous to greatness, rendered him intimate with state-affairs, and might, had that been the object of his ambition, have been the means of accumulating wealth. He was warmly patronized by Lord Bute, then prime minister, and, notwithstanding his unpopularity, possessed of considerable learning and taste. The access to the London stage was now open to the favourite of the favourite. Garrick, indeed, persisted in not bringing out *Douglas*, but that play appeared with great success upon the rival stage of Covent Garden, where the silver-tongued Barry represented the hero of the piece; and soon after, the manager of Drury Lane, with many protestations of his admiration of the merits of the piece and genius of the author, brought out the play of *Agis*, which he had formerly neglected. The manager, however, had made the worse choice. Inferior to *Douglas*, especially in having no point of predominant interest, no grappling-iron to secure the attention of the audience—even the talents of Garrick could not give to *Agis* much vitality. Its stately declamation was heard with cold inattention, and, contrary to the hopes of the author, and prognostication of the experienced manager, after a flash of success, it was withdrawn from the stage. Several other tragedies of Mr. Home's were afterwards exhibited, but none, save *Douglas*, with remarkable applause, and one or two with marked disapprobation. The cause of such repeated failures, after such splendid success, we may afterwards advert to.

Mr. Home was now formally installed in Lord Bute's family as private secretary, and his biographer hints that his lordship's choice was determined more by the desire of enjoying the poet's agreeable conversation, than by any expectation of deriving assistance from him in transacting public business. Home was indeed, like many other bards, in every respect the reverse of a man of method, indifferent to loss of time, and averse from all regularity and form, which are necessary to the management of affairs. When, on some occasion, he had lent his friend Adam Fergusson £200, upon a note of hand, and could not redeliver the *voucher* on receiving payment of the money, he gave an acknowledgment in terms too poetical to be very good in law; "If ever the note appears," said the letter of acknowledgment, "it will be of no use but to show what a foolish, thoughtless, inattentive fellow I am." On the other hand, his conversation, while in the prime of life, must

have been highly entertaining. When those of the present generation knew him, age had brought its usual infirmities of repetition and prolixity, but still his discourse was charming, "He came into a company," says one of his contemporaries, "like a sunbeam into a darkened room : his excellent temper and unaffected cheerfulness, his absence from everything like reserve or formality, giving light to every eye and colour to every cheek. Yet Home's conversation could neither be termed sprightly nor witty. In his comic humour it was characterized by a flow of easy pleasantry, of that species which indicates the speaker willing to please or be pleased at the lightest rate ; and in his higher mood his thoughts, naturally turned to such subjects, were without affectation, formed on the sublime and beautiful in poetry, the dignified and the virtuous in history, the romantic and interesting in tradition, upon whatever is elevating and inspiring in humanity." Such conversation, flowing naturally and unaffectedly from a high imagination and extensive reading, is found to carry along with its tide and influence even the men of phlegmatic minds, who might, *à priori*, be regarded as incapable to appreciate and enjoy it. The excellent King George III. was then under the charge of the Earl of Bute, who was his chief preceptor. The turn of his understanding was towards strong sense and useful information—the gods had not made him poetical :—nevertheless, he loved the person and conversation of Home, of whom he naturally saw much. On his accession to the throne, that sovereign, of his own free motion, settled upon the poet a pension of £300; an office connected with Scotland, called Conservator of Scots Privileges at Campvere, added as much more to his income, and that was all the fortune with which he returned to Scotland when Lord Bute retired from office. He had also a lease of a farm on very advantageous terms from his former patron and friend Sir David Kinloch of Gilmerton, where he built a house, as has been already mentioned. In 1770, he married the daughter of Mr. Home, a friend and relative of his own, whose delicate health gave his affectionate disposition frequent cause of apprehension, but who nevertheless survived him. They had no family.

In 1778, Mr. Home again indulged his passion for military affairs by entering into the South Fencibles, a regiment raised by Henry Duke of Buccleuch, in which he had for comrades the Earl of Haddington, William Adam, M.P. (afterwards lord high commissioner of the Jury Court of Scotland), and others who were well qualified to approve his merit and delight in his society. A fall from horseback, the second severe accident of the kind, interrupted his military career, and the contusion which he received in his head had a material influence on his future life. This accident was accompanied by something resembling a concussion of the brain. "He recovered the accident as far as his

bodily health was concerned," says Mr. Mackenzie, "but his mind was never restored to its former vigour, nor regained its former vivacity." We may add that his subsequent compositions, though displaying flashes of his genius, never showed it in a continued and sustained flight.

It was, however, only the pressing remonstrances of his friends which could induce Mr. Home, after this accident, to resign the *military* mode of life to which he had been so much attached, and to retire into a quiet and settled privacy of life. After the year 1779 he settled in Edinburgh, where he was the object of general respect and veneration. He mingled in society to the last, and though his memory was impaired respecting late events, it seemed strong and vigorous when his conversation turned on those which had occupied his attention at an early period. The following account of an entertainment at his house in Edinburgh, we received from a literary gentleman of Scotland, who was then beginning to attract the attention of the public. He was honoured with the notice of Mr. Home from some family circumstances, but chiefly from the kindly feeling which the veteran still preserved towards all who seemed disposed to turn their attention to Scottish literature. There were seven male guests at table, of whom five were coeval with the landlord—then upwards of eighty-four. A bachelor gentleman of fifty was treated as what is called the *Boots*, and went through the duty of ringing the bell, carving the joint, and discharging the other functions usually imposed on the youngest member of the company. Our friend, who was not much above thirty, was considered too much of a boy to be trusted with any such charge of the ceremonial, and, in fact, his very presence in this venerable assembly seemed to be altogether forgotten, while, it may be supposed, he was much more anxious to listen to their conversation than to interrupt it by talking himself. The very entertainment seemed antediluvian, though excellent. There were dishes of ancient renown, and liquors unknown almost to the present day. A capper-caelzie, or cock of the wood, which has been extinct in Scotland for more than a century, was presented on the board as a homage to the genius of Mr. Home, sent from the pine forests of Norway. The *cup*, or cold tankard, which he recommended particularly, was after an ancient Scottish receipt. The claret, still the favourite beverage of the poet, was excellent, and, like himself, of venerable antiquity, but preserving its spirit and flavour. The subjects of their conversation might be compared to that held by ghosts, who, sitting on their midnight tombs, talk over the deeds they have done and witnessed while in the body. The *forty-five* was a remarkable epoch, and called forth remarks and anecdotes without number. The former civil turmoils of the years 1715 and 1718 were familiar to some of those present. The conversation of these hale

ancients had nothing of the weakness of age, though a little of its garrulity. They seemed the Nestors of their age; men whose gray hairs only served

“To mark the heroes born in better days.”

Mr. Home, from the consequences of his accident, was, perhaps, the most broken of the party. But, on his own ground, his memory was entire, his conversation full both of spirit and feeling. One story of the evening our correspondent recollects. Mr. Home, beginning it in a tone somewhat feeble, rose into strength of articulation with the interest of the story. The names of the parties concerned, and the place where the incident took place, our informer has unhappily forgotten. What he does remember we shall give in his own words :

“A person of high Scottish descent, the son of one of Caledonia’s most eminent nobility, exiled on account of his taking part with the house of Stuart, had entered into foreign service, and risen to the rank of lieutenant-colonel. He was stationed in the advanced post destined to protect the trenches which the army to which he was attached had opened before a large and well-garrisoned town. Some appearances in the besieged place induced the Scottish officer to conjecture that a strong sortie would be made in the course of the night. He went to the tent of Prince —, commander-in-chief of the army, to communicate the intelligence, and to request that a support to the advance might be held in readiness. The prince, engaged in writing despatches, did not even raise his head from the paper, but answered in a haughty tone, ‘Je suis fâché.’ The Scotchman, whose sense of his own consequence did not permit him to believe that this answer could be addressed to him, advanced nearer to the prince, and began to repeat what he had said. The prince then raised his head, looking scornfully at the officer, and reiterated, ‘Je suis fâché, de vous et de vos petites affaires.’—‘De moi et de mes petites affaires!’—said the colonel, completely roused by the insult—‘petit prince que vous êtes!’ The prince, as brave as insolent, readily agreed to waive his privilege as commander-in-chief, and give the officer so gratuitously insulted the satisfaction his honour required. ‘But’ (continued Mr. Home, his large light eyes suffused with tears, which flowed involuntarily as he told the conclusion,) ‘the brave gentleman lived not to receive the promised atonement. He returned to his post—the expected sortie took place, the advanced guard were cut to pieces, and among them, in the morning, was found the body of our unfortunate and gallant countryman, who had spent his last breath in the unequal combat to which the arrogance of his general had exposed him.’”

Mr. Mackenzie has, we think, omitted to give some description of Mr. Home’s person and countenance, about which, nevertheless, our

readers may entertain a rational curiosity. We ourselves only remember what a Scottish poet of eminence has called

"Home's pale ghost just gliding from the stage."

But his picture by Raeburn\* enables us to say that his exterior, in his younger years, must have been impressive, if not handsome. His features are happily animated with the expression of a poet, whose eye, overlooking the uninteresting and everyday objects around, is bent to pursue the flight of his imagination through the dim region of past events, or the yet more mysterious anticipations of futurity.

Respecting his personal habits, we can add little to what has been told by his elegant and affectionate biographer. We remember only, that, with the natural vanity of an author, he was regular, while his strength permitted, in attendance upon the theatre when any actor of eminence represented Douglas. He had his own favourite seat beside the scenes, and, willing to be pleased by those who were desirous to give pleasure, his approbation was consequently rather measured out according to the kindness of his feelings than the accuracy of his critical judgment.

Undisturbed by pain, and after a long and lingering decay, he late and slowly approached the conclusion of life's drama. His esteemed friend Lord Haddington was one of the last friends whom he was able to receive. After looking at his lordship wistfully for some time, the kindness of his heart seemed to awaken his slumbering powers of recollection; he smiled, and pressed the friendly hand that was extended towards him, with a silent assurance of his tender remembrance. He died the 5th September 1808, in the eighty-sixth year of his age. It was impossible to lament the extinction of the wasted taper; yet there was a general feeling that Home's death closed an era in the literary history of Scotland, and dissolved a link which, though worn and frail, seemed to connect the present generation with that of their fathers.

We have promised to take, in the second place, some notice of the literary society of Scotland at the time when Home was so important a member of it, and which has been so interestingly treated by Mr. Mackenzie, who, in his own connection with the preceding age, must be perhaps addressed as *Ultime Scotorum*.

Hospitality was at that time a distinguished feature in Scottish society; Mr. Home's income was chiefly employed in it. "His house," according to his friend Adam Fergusson, "was always as full of his friends as it could hold, fuller than, in modern manners, it would be made to hold." The form and show of the entertainment were little attended to; that would have thrown a dulness upon the freedom of intercourse, for the guest took with good-will that which the landlord

\* In Miss Fergusson's collection at Huntley-burn.

found most easy to present. The science of the gastronome was unknown. The Scottish manners were, indeed, emerging from the Egyptian darkness of the preceding age, when a dame of no small quality, the worshipful Lady Pumphraston, buttered a pound of green tea sent her as an exquisite delicacy, dressed it as condiment to a rump of salted beef, and complained that no degree of boiling would render these foreign greens tender. Yet the farm, with the poultry-yard and the dove-cot, added to the supplies furnished by the gun and fishing-rod, furnished a plentiful, if not an elegant table. French wine and brandy were had at a cheap rate, chiefly by infractions of the revenue laws, at which the government were contented to wink, rather than irritate a country in which there was little money and much disaffection. It only remained to find as many guests as the table would hold, and the social habits of the country rendered that seldom difficult. For beds many shifts were made, and the prospect of a dance in particular reconciled damsels to sleep in the proportion of half a dozen to each apartment, while their gallant partners would be sometimes contented with an out-house, a barn, or a hay-loft. It is not, however, of the general state of society which we have to speak, but of that of a more distinguished character.

Mr. Mackenzie, with a partiality natural to his age and his country, speaks highly of the literary society of Scotland at this time, and even ventures, in some respects, to give it a preference over that of the sister country. He enlarges, in his own elegant language, upon the—

“Free and cordial communication of sentiments, the natural play of fancy and good-humour, which prevailed among the circle of men whom I have described. It was very different from that display of learning—that prize-fighting of wit, which distinguished a literary circle of our sister country, of which we have some authentic and curious records. There all ease of intercourse was changed for the pride of victory; and the victors, like some savage combatants, gave no quarter to the vanquished. This may, perhaps, be accounted for, more from the situation than the dispositions of the principal members of that society. The literary circle of London was a sort of sect, a *caste* separate from the ordinary professions and habits of common life. They were traders in talent and learning, and brought, like other traders, samples of their goods into company, with a jealousy of competition which prevented their enjoying, as much as otherwise they might, any excellence in their competitors.”—Vol. i., pp. 22, 23.

Without examining how far the Scottish literati might gain or lose by being knitted almost exclusively together in their own peculiar sect, we may take the liberty of running over the names of three or four per-

sons, the most distinguished of the circle, with such trifling anecdotes as may throw additional light on Mr. Mackenzie's pleasing picture. We may add, that our biographer, reading his sketch of Mr. Home's Life before a learned body,\* many of them the relations or surviving friends of the deceased worthies of whom he spoke, was bound, by a certain natural delicacy, not to represent, except in a very mitigated view, the foibles of the distinguished persons of whom he spoke. We, on the contrary, claim a right to portray with a broader pencil; our information is of a popular nature; and, being so, it is rather wonderful it has furnished us with so few of the darker colours. We can only pretend to paint the northern sages in Tristram Shandy's point of view—that is, according to their hobby-horses.

The celebrated David Hume, the philosopher and historian, was certainly the most distinguished person in the circle. That he was most unhappy in permitting the acuteness of his talents, and the pride arising from the consciousness of possessing them, to involve him in a maze of sceptical illusions, is most undeniable; as well as that he was highly culpable in giving to the world the miserable results of his leisure. Mr. Mackenzie states, in mitigation, not in exculpation, that the great Pyrrhonist—"had, in the language which the Grecian historian applies to an illustrious Roman, two minds, one which indulged in the metaphysical scepticism which his genius could invent, but which it could not always disentangle; another, simple, natural, and playful, which made his conversation delightful to his friends, and even frequently conciliated men whose principles of belief, his philosophical doubts, if they had not power to shake, had grieved and offended. During the latter period of his life, I was frequently in his company, amidst persons of genuine piety, and I never heard him venture a remark at which such men, or ladies—still more susceptible than men—could take offence. His good-nature and benevolence prevented such an injury to his hearers: it was unfortunate that he often forgot what injury some of his writings might do to his readers."—Vol. i., pp. 20, 21.

Mr. David Hume's intimacy with his namesake and friend, John, was of the closest kind, and suffered no interruption. It was, indeed, an instance among many, that friendships are formed more from a general similarity in temper and disposition, than from a turn to the same studies and pursuits. David Hume was no good judge of poetry; had little feeling for it; and examined it by the hackneyed rules of criticism; which, having crushed a hundred poets, will never, it may be prophesied, create, or assist in creating, a single one. John Home's disposition was excursive and romantic—that of David, both from nature and habit, was subtle, sceptical; and he, far from being inclined to concede a temporary degree of faith to *la douce chimère*, was

\* The Royal Society of Edinburgh; of which Mr. Mackenzie was secretary.



disposed to reason away even the realities which were subjected to his examination. The poet's imagination tends to throw a halo on the distant objects—the sophistry of the metaphysician shrouded them with a mist which, unlike other northern mists, not only obscured but dwarfed their real dimensions. The one saw more, the other saw less, than was actually visible. Yet this very difference tended to bind the two friends, for such they were *usque ad aras*, in a more intimate union. John Home by no means spared his friend's metaphysical studies. The discourse turning one evening upon a young man, previously of irreproachable conduct, having robbed his master, and eloped with a considerable sum, John Home accounted for his unexpected turpitude, by the nature of the culprit's studies, which had chiefly lain in *Boston's Fourfold State* (a treatise of deep Calvinistical divinity) and *Hume's Essays*. The philosopher was somewhat nettled at the jest, probably on account of the singular conjunction of the two works.

On the other hand, John was often the butt of his friend's jests, on account of his romantic disposition for warlike enterprise, his attachment to the orthography of his name, and similar peculiarities, indicative of a warm and susceptible imagination.

Upon some occasion, when General Fletcher mentioned the inconvenience which he had experienced from the rudeness and restiveness of a postilion, John Home exclaimed, in a Drawcansir tone, "Where were your pistols?" This created a general laugh; and next day, as Mr. Home was about to set off for a visit to Dr. Carlyle, at Musselburgh, he received a letter, with a large parcel: the import bore that his friends and well-wishers could not think of his taking so dangerous a journey without being suitably armed, and the packet, being opened, was found to contain a huge pair of pistols, such as are sold at stalls to be *fairings* for children, made of gingerbread, and adorned with gilding.

When David Hume was suffering under the long and lingering illness which led him inch by inch to his grave, his friend John, with the most tender and solicitous attention, attended him on a journey to Bath, which it was supposed might be of temporary service, though a cure was impossible. When his companion's travelling pistols (not those of the savoury materials above mentioned) were handed into the carriage, the historian made an observation at once humorous and affecting. "You shall have your humour, John, and fight with as many highway-men as you please; for I have too little of life left to be an object worth saving." With more profound raillery he supposed that he himself, John Home, and Adam Fergusson, who studied Roman history with Roman feeling and Roman spirit, had been sovereigns of three adjacent states; and John Home thus states in one of his letters the result of his friend's reflections:—

"He knew very well, he said (having often disputed the point with us), the great opinion we had of military virtues as essential to every state; that from these sentiments rooted in us, he was certain he would be attacked and interrupted in his projects of cultivating, improving, and civilizing mankind by the arts of peace; that he comforted himself with reflecting, that, from our want of economy and order in our affairs, we should be continually in want of money; whilst he would have his finances in excellent condition, his magazines well filled, and naval stores in abundance; but that his final stroke of policy, upon which he depended, was to give one of us a large subsidy to fall upon the other, which would infallibly secure to him peace and quiet, and, after a long war, would probably terminate in his being master of all the three kingdoms."—Vol. i., pp. 181, 182.

We are disposed more to question the taste of the joke which, in David Hume's last will, alludes to two of his friend's foibles. The grave, and its appurtenances of epitaphs and testaments, are subjects, according to Samuel Johnson, on which wise men think with awe and gravity; yet there is something affecting in the concluding allusion to the undisturbed friendship of those whom death was about to part. The bequest we allude to is contained in the following codicil:—

"I leave to my friend, Mr. John Home, of Kilduff, ten dozen of my old claret at his choice; and one single bottle of that other liquor called port. I also leave to him six dozen of port, provided that he attests under his hand, signed John *Hume*, that he has himself finished that bottle at two sittings. By this concession, he will at once terminate the only two differences that ever arose between us concerning temporal matters."—Vol. i., p. 163.

The subject of the name has been already mentioned. The bequest of wine alludes to John Home's partiality to claret, on which he wrote a well-known epigram, when the high duties were enforced against Scotland.\* There is much more that is interesting and curious respecting David Hume in this piece of biography, which contains also several of his original letters.

Dr. Adam Fergusson, the author of the *History of the Roman Republic*, and distinguished besides as a moral philosopher, was a distinguished member of the literary society in which the poet Home, and the philosopher Hume, made such a figure. The son of a clergyman

\* The government had long connived at a practice of importing claret into Scotland, under the mitigated duties applicable to the liquor called Southampton port. The epigram of John Home was as follows:—

"Firm and erect the Caledonian stood,  
Old was his mutton, and his claret good:  
'Let him drink port,' an English statesman cried.  
He drank the poison, and his spirit died."

at Loggierait, in Athol, he was himself destined to the Church, took orders, and went as chaplain to the Black Watch, or 42nd Highland regiment, when that corps was first sent to the continent. As the regiment advanced to the battle of Fontenoy, the commanding officer, Sir Robert Monro, was astonished to see the chaplain at the head of the column, with a broadsword drawn in his hand. He desired him to go to the rear with the surgeons, a proposal which Adam Fergusson spurned. Sir Robert at length told him that his commission did not entitle him to be present in the post which he had assumed. "D—n my commission," said the war-like chaplain, throwing it towards his colonel. It may easily be supposed that the matter was only remembered as a good jest; but the future historian of Rome shared the honours and dangers of that dreadful day, where, according to the account of the French themselves, "the Highland furies rushed in upon them with more violence than ever did a sea driven by a tempest."

Professor Adam Fergusson's subsequent history is well known. He recovered from a decided shock of paralysis in the sixtieth year of his life; from which period he became a strict Pythagorean in his diet, eating nothing but vegetables, and drinking only water or milk. He survived till the year 1816, when he died in full possession of his mental faculties, at the advanced age of ninety-three. The deep interest which he took in the eventful war had long seemed to be the main tie that connected him with passing existence; and the news of Waterloo acted on the aged patriot as a *nunc dimittis*. From that hour the feeling that had almost alone given him energy decayed, and he avowedly relinquished all desire for prolonged life. It is the belief of his family that he might have remained with them much longer, had he desired to do so, and continued the exercise which had hitherto promoted his health. Long after his eightieth year he was one of the most striking old men whom it was possible to look at. His firm step and ruddy cheek contrasted agreeably and unexpectedly with his silver locks; and the dress which he usually wore, much resembling that of the Flemish peasant, gave an air of peculiarity to his whole figure. In his conversation, the mixture of original thinking with high moral feeling and extensive learning; his love of country; contempt of luxury; and, especially, the strong subjection of his passions and feelings to the dominion of his reason, made him, perhaps, the most striking example of the Stoic philosopher which could be seen in modern days. His house, while he continued to reside in Edinburgh, was a general point of reunion among his friends, particularly of a Sunday, where there generally met, at a hospitable dinner-party, the most distinguished literati of the old time who still remained, with such young persons as were thought worthy to approach their circle, and listen to their conversation. The place of his residence was an insulated house,

at some distance from the town, which its visitors (notwithstanding its internal comforts) chose to call, for that reason, Kamtschatka.

Two constant attendants on this weekly symposium were the chemical philosophers Dr. Black and Dr. Hutton. They were particular friends, though there was something extremely opposite in their external appearance and manner. They were both, indeed, tall and thin ; but there all personal similarity ended. Dr. Black spoke with the English pronunciation, with punctilious accuracy of expression, both in point of manner and matter. His dress was of the same description, regulated, in some small degree, according to the rules which formerly imposed a formal and full-dress habit on the members of the medical faculty. The geologist was the very reverse of this. His dress approached to a quaker's in simplicity ; and his conversation was conducted in broad phrases, expressed with a broad Scotch accent, which often heightened the humour of what he said. The difference of manner sometimes placed the two philosophers in whimsical contrast with each other. We recollect an anecdote, entertaining enough, both on that account, and as showing how difficult it is for philosophy to wage a war with prejudice.

It chanced that the two doctors had held some discourse together upon the folly of abstaining from feeding on the testaceous creatures of the land, while those of the sea were considered as delicacies. Wherefore not eat snails?—they are well known to be nutritious and wholesome—even sanative in some cases. The epicures of olden times enumerated among the richest and raciest delicacies, the snails which were fed in the marble quarries of Lucca ; the Italians still hold them in esteem. In short, it was determined that a gastronomic experiment should be made at the expense of the snails. The snails were procured, dieted for a time, then stewed for the benefit of the two philosophers ; who had either invited no guest to their banquet, or found none who relished in prospect the *pièce de résistance*. A huge dish of snails was placed before them ; but philosophers are but men after all ; and the stomachs of both doctors began to revolt against the proposed experiment. Nevertheless, if they looked with disgust on the snails, they retained their awe for each other ; so that each, conceiving the symptoms of internal revolt peculiar to himself, began with infinite exertion to swallow, in very small quantities, the mess which he internally loathed. Dr. Black, at length, “showed the white feather,” but in a very delicate manner, as if to sound the opinion of his messmate :—“ Doctor,” he said, in his precise and quiet manner, “ Doctor—do you not think that they taste a little—a very little, green ? ”—“ D——d green, d——d green, indeed,—tak them awa’, tak them awa’,” vociferated Dr. Hutton, starting up from table, and giving full vent to his feelings of abhorrence. And so ended all hopes of introducing snails into the

modern *cuisine*; and thus philosophy can no more cure a nausea than honour can set a broken limb.

Lord Elibank (Patrick, remembered in Scotland by the name of the Clever Lord) was one of the most remarkable amongst this remarkable society. He was distinguished by the liveliness of his conversation and the acuteness of his understanding, and many of his *bon-mots* are still preserved. When, for example, he was first told of Johnson's celebrated definition of the word *oats*, as being the food of men in Scotland, and horses in England, he answered with happy readiness, "Very true; and where will you find such horses and such men?" Lord Elibank indulged greatly in paradoxes, which he was wont to defend with much ingenuity. He piqued himself, at the same time, on his worldly prudence; so much so, as to reply to some one who told him of Mr. Home's having got a pension, at the suggestion of the King himself.—"it is nobly done; but it is as impossible for the King to make John Home or Adam Fergusson rich, as it would be for his Majesty to make me poor." Lord Elibank, with John Home, David Hume, Fergusson, and others, were members of a convivial association called the *Poker Club*, because its purpose was to stir up and encourage the public spirit of Scotland, the people of which were then much exasperated at not being permitted to raise a militia in the same manner as England. Dr. Fergusson, upon the occasion, composed a continuation of Arbuthnot's satirical *History of John Bull*, which he entitled the *History of Margaret, otherwise called Sister Peg*. The work was distinguished for humour and satire; and led to a curious jest on the part of David Hume. He had been left out of the secret, as not being supposed a good counsel-keeper, and he took his revenge by gravely writing a letter to Dr. Carlyle, claiming the work as his own, with an air of sober reality, which had the letter been found after any lapse of time, would have appeared an indubitable proof of his being really the author. We have not room to insert this piece of literary persiflage.

The Poker Club served its purpose; and, many years afterwards, symptoms of discontent on the subject of the militia were to be found in Scotland. Burns says of his native country,

"Lang time she's been in fractious mood,  
Her lost militia fired her blood,  
De'il nor they never mair do good,  
Play'd her that pliskie.

Most of the members of the Poker were fast friends to the Hanoverian dynasty, though opposed to the actual Administration, on account of the neglect, and, as they accounted it, the affront put upon their native country. Lord Elibank, however, had, in all probability, ulterior views; for, notwithstanding his talents and his prudence, his love of

paradox, perhaps, had induced him to place himself at the head of the scattered remnant of Jacobites, from which party every person else was taking the means of deserting. It is now ascertained by documents among the Stuart papers, that he carried on a correspondence with the Chevalier, which was not suspected by his most intimate friends.

We have heard of a meeting of the Poker Club, which was convoked long after it had ceased to have regular existence, when its remaining members were far advanced in years. The experiment was not successful. Those who had last met in the full vigour of health and glow of intellect, taking an eager interest in the passing events of the world, seemed now, in each other's eyes, cold, torpid, inactive, loaded with infirmities, and occupied with the selfish care of husbanding the remainder of their health and strength, rather than in the gaiety and frolic of a convivial evening. Most had renounced even the moderate worship of Bacchus, which, on former occasions, had seldom been neglected. The friends saw their own condition reflected in the persons of each other, and became sensible that the time of convivial meetings was passed. The abrupt contrast betwixt what they had been and what they were, was too unpleasant to be endured, and the Poker Club never met again. This, it may be alleged, is a contradiction of what we have said concerning the Nestorian banquet at John Home's, formerly noticed. But the circumstances were different. The gentlemen then alluded to had kept near to each other in the decline as well as the ascent of life, met frequently, and were become accustomed to the growing infirmities of each other, as each had to his own. But the Poker Club, most of whom had been in full strength when the regular meetings were discontinued, found themselves abruptly reassembled as old and broken men, and naturally agreed with the Gaelic bard that age "is dark and unlovely."

One or two gossiping paragraphs on the subject of Adam Smith, whose distinguished name may render the most trifling notices concerning him matter of some interest, and we will then release our courteous reader from our recollections on the subject of these old Northern Lights. Dr. Smith is well known to have been one of the most absent men living. It was, indeed, an attribute which, if anywhere, might have been matched in the society we speak of, of whom several, particularly John Home and General Fletcher Campbell, were extremely addicted to fits of absence. But those of the great Economist were abstraction itself. Mr. Mackenzie placed in his hand the beautiful tale of *La Roche*, in which he introduces Mr. David Hume, for the express purpose of knowing whether there was anything in it which Mr. Hume's surviving friends could think hurtful to his memory. Dr. Smith read and highly approved of the MS. ; but, on returning it to Mr. Mackenzie, only expressed his surprise that Mr. Hume should never have

mentioned *the anecdote* to him. When walking in the street, Adam had a manner of talking and laughing to himself, which often attracted the notice and excited the surprise of the passengers. He used himself to mention the ejaculation of an old market-woman, "Hegh, sirs!" shaking her head as she uttered it; to which her companion answered, having echoed the compassionate sigh, "and he is well put on too!" expressing their surprise that a decided lunatic, who, from his dress, appeared to be a gentleman, should be permitted to walk abroad.—In a private room his demeanour was equally remarkable; and we shall never forget one particular evening, when he put an elderly maiden lady, who presided at the tea-table, to sore confusion, by neglecting utterly her invitations to be seated, and walked round and round the circle, stopping ever and anon to steal a lump from the sugar basin, which the venerable spinster was at length constrained to place on her own knee, as the only method of securing it from his most uneconomical depredations. His appearance mumping the eternal sugar, was something indescribable.

We had the following anecdotes from a colleague of Dr. Smith, who, as is well known, was a commissioner of the Board of Customs. That board had in their service, as porter, a stately person, who, dressed in a huge scarlet gown or cloak, covered with frogs of worsted lace, and holding in his hand a staff about seven feet high, as an emblem of his office, used to mount guard before the Custom-house when a board was to be held. It was the etiquette that, as each commissioner entered, the porter should go through a sort of salute with his staff of office, resembling that which officers used formerly to perform with their spontoon, and then marshal the dignitary to the hall of meeting. This ceremony had been performed before the great Economist perhaps five hundred times. Nevertheless one day, as he was about to enter the Custom-house, the motions of this janitor seem to have attracted his eye without their character or purpose reaching his apprehension, and on a sudden he began to imitate his gestures, as a recruit does those of his drill-sergeant. The porter, having drawn up in front of the door, presented his staff as a soldier does his musket; the commissioner, raising his cane, and holding it with both hands by the middle, returned the salute with the utmost gravity. The inferior officer, much amazed, recovered his weapon, wheeled to the right, stepping a pace back to give the commissioner room to pass, lowering his staff at the same time, in token of obeisance. Dr. Smith, instead of passing on, drew up on the opposite side, and lowered his cane at the same angle. The functionary, much out of countenance, next moved up-stairs, with his staff advanced, while the author of the *Wealth of Nations* followed with his bamboo in precisely the same posture, and his whole soul apparently wrapped up in the purpose of placing his

foot exactly on the same spot of each step which had been occupied by the officer who preceded him. At the door of the hall, the porter again drew off, saluted with his staff, and bowed reverentially. The philosopher again imitated his motions, and returned his bow with the most profound gravity. When the Doctor entered the apartment, the spell under which he seemed to act was entirely broken, and our informant, who, very much amused, had followed him the whole way, had some difficulty to convince him that he had been doing anything extraordinary. Upon another occasion, having to sign an official minute or mandate, Adam Smith was observed to be unusually tedious, when the same person, peeping over his shoulder, discovered that he was engaged, not in writing his own name, but in imitating, as nearly as possible, the signature of his brother in office, who had held the pen before him. These instances of absence equal the abstractions of the celebrated Dr. Harvey; but whoever has read the deep theories and abstruse calculations contained in the *Wealth of Nations* must readily allow that a mind habitually employed in such themes, must necessarily be often rapt above the sublunary occurrences of every-day life.

We are now approaching the third subject proposed in our Review, the consideration of John Home's character as an author, founded on the present edition of his collected works. Our criticism on his poetical character need not be very minute, for his chef-d'œuvre, *Douglas*, is known to every one, and his other dramatic labours are scarcely known at all. Upon the merits of the first, every reader has already made up his mind, and on those of the others we might, perhaps, find it difficult to procure an attentive hearing. Still, however, some mark of homage is due to, perhaps, the most popular tragic author of modern times; and we must pay suit and service, were it only with a peppercorn.

We have said already that *Douglas* owes a great part of its attractions to the interest of the plot, which, however, is by no means a probable one. There is something overstrained in the twenty years spent by Lady Randolph in deep and suppressed sorrow; nor is it natural, though useful certainly to the poet, that her regrets should turn less on the husband of her youth, than upon the new-born child whom she had scarcely seen. There is something awkward in her sudden confidence to Anna, as is pointed out by David Hume. "The spectator," says the critic, "is apt to suspect it was done in order to instruct him; a very good end, but which might have been obtained by a careful and artificial conduct of the dialogue." This is all unquestionably true; but the spectator should, and, indeed, must, make considerable allowances, if he expects to receive pleasure from the drama. He must get his mind, according to Tony Lumpkin's phrase, into "a concatenation accordingly," since he cannot reasonably



expect that scenes of deep and complicated interest shall be placed before him, in close succession, without some force being put upon ordinary probability; and the question is not, how far you have sacrificed your judgment in order to accommodate the fiction, but rather what is the degree of delight you have received in return. Perhaps, in this point of view, it is scarcely possible for a spectator to make such sacrifices for greater pleasure than we have enjoyed, in seeing Lady Randolph personified by the inimitable Siddons. Great as that pleasure was on all occasions, it was increased in a manner which can hardly be conceived when her son (the late Mr. H. Siddons) supported his mother in the character of Douglas, and when the full overflowing of maternal tenderness was authorized, nay, authenticated and realized, by the actual existence of the relationship. There will, and must be on other occasions, some check of the feeling, however virtuous and tender, when a woman of feeling and delicacy pours her maternal caresses on a performer who, although to be accounted her son for the night, is, in reality, a stranger. But in the scenes we allude to, that chilling obstacle was removed; and while Lady Randolph exhausted her tenderness on the supposed Douglas, the mother was, in truth, indulging the same feelings towards her actual son. It may be erroneous to judge this way of a drama which can hardly be again illustrated by such powers, exercised under circumstances so exciting to the principal performer, and so nearly approaching to reality. Yet, even in an abstract view, we agree with Mr. Mackenzie that the chief scene between Lady Randolph and Old Norval, in which the preservation and existence of Douglas is discovered, has no equal in modern, and scarcely a superior in the ancient, drama. It is certainly one of the most effective which the English stage has to boast; and we learn with pleasure, but without surprise, that, though many other parts of the play were altered before its representation, we have this masterpiece exactly as it was thrown off in the original sketch.

"Thus it is," says the accomplished editor, "that the fervid creation of genius and fancy strikes out what is so excellent as well as vivid, as not to admit of amendment, and which, indeed, correction would spoil instead of improving. This is the true inspiration of the poet, which gives to criticism, instead of borrowing from it, its model and its rule, and which, it is possible, in some diffident authors, the terrors of criticism may have weakened or extinguished."—Vol. i., p. 93.

It is justly remarked by Mr. Mackenzie, that the intense interest excited by the scene of the discovery occasions some falling off in the two last acts; yet this is not so great as to injure the effect of the play when the parts are suitably supported. Mrs. Siddons, indeed, (we cannot help identifying her with Lady Randolph,) gave such terrible interest to the concluding scene, that we can truly say the decay of

interest, which is certainly felt both in perusing the drama and in seeing it only moderately well performed, was quite imperceptible.

In a general point of view, the interest of *Douglas* is of a kind which addresses itself to the bosom of every spectator. The strength of maternal affection is a feeling which all the audience have had the advantage of experiencing, which such mothers as are present have themselves exercised, and which moves the general mind more deeply than even distresses arising from the passion of love—one too frequently produced on the stage not to become, in some degree, hackneyed and uninteresting.

The language of the piece is beautiful. "Mrs. Siddons told me," says the editor, "that she never found any *study*" (which, in the technical language of the stage, means the getting verses by heart) "so easy as that of *Douglas*, which is one of the best criterions of excellence in the dramatic style."

The character of *Douglas*, enthusiastic, romantic, desirous of honour, careless of life and every other advantage where glory lay in the balance, flowed freely from the author's heart, to which such sentiments were the most familiar.

The structure of the story somewhat resembles that of Voltaire's *Mérope*, but is as simple and natural as that of the French author is complicated and artificial. *Mérope* came out about 1743, and Mr. Home may, therefore, easily have seen it. But he has certainly derived his more simple and natural tale from the old ballad. In memory of this, the tune of *Gil Morrice*, a simple and beautiful air, is, in Scotland at least, always played while the curtain rises.

The poetical moral of the piece is justly observed by Mr. Mackenzie to have captivated all who, before its representation in Scotland, happened to hear any part of it recited. He gives us his own authority, as bearing witness that some of the most striking passages, and particularly the opening soliloquy, were got by heart and repeated by fair lips for the admiration of the tea-tables of Edinburgh.

"And you, fair dames of merry England,  
As fast your tears did pour ;"—

We have the evidence of the accomplished Earl of Haddington, that he remembers the celebrated Lady Hervey (the beautiful Molly Lapelle of Pope and Gay) weeping like an infant over the manuscript of *Douglas*.

It may, perhaps, seem strange that the author, in his preceding tragedy of *Agis*, and in his subsequent dramatic efforts, so far from attaining similar excellence, never even approached to the success of *Douglas*; yet good reasons can be assigned for his failure, without imputing it, during his best years at least, to a decay of genius.

*Agis* was a tragedy the interest of which turned, at first, exclusively upon politics, a subject which men are fiercely interested in, if connected with the party questions agitating their own country at the time; but which, when the same refers to the forgotten revolutions of a distant country and a remote period are always caviare to the million. Addison, indeed, succeeded in his splendid poem of *Cato*; but both the name and its history were so generally known as to facilitate greatly its interest with the public. Besides, the author was at the head of the literature of his day, and not unskilled in the art of indoctrinating the readers of the *Spectator* in the knowledge necessary to understand *Cato*. But the history of *Agis* and the fortunes of Sparta were familiar only to scholars; and it was difficult to interest the audience at large in the revolutions of a country which they knew only by name. The Ephori and the double kings of Lacedæmon must have been puzzling to a common audience, even at the outset. Both *Cato* and *Agis*, but particularly the latter, suffered by the ingrafting of a love intrigue, commonplace and cumbersome, as well as unnecessary, upon the principal plot; which, on the contrary, it ought in either case to have been the business of the author to keep constantly under the view of the audience, and to illustrate and enhance by every subordinate aid in his power; yet *Agis*, from the ease of the dialogue and beauty of the declamation, and being also, according to the technical phrase, *strongly cast*—for Garrick played Lysander, and Mrs. Cibber, Evanthe—was, for some representations, favourably received; and, had it been written in French, it would probably have been permanently successful on the Parisian stage. In this and other pieces the author seems to have suffered in the eyes of his countrymen by attending too much to the advice of David Hume, in such cases surely an incompetent judge, who entreats him, for heaven's sake, "to read Shakspeare, but get Racine and Sophocles by heart." The critic has not sufficiently considered how much the British stage differs both from the French and the Grecian in the structure and character of the entertainments there exhibited.

The *Siege of Aquileia* was acted for the first time in 1760. Garrick expected the most unbounded success, and he himself played the principal character. It failed, however, from an objection thus stated by Mr. Mackenzie:—

"Most, or indeed almost all, the incidents are told to, not witnessed by, the spectators, who, in England beyond any other country, are swayed by the Horatian maxim, and feel very imperfectly those incidents which are not '*oculis subjecta fidelibus*.' It rather languished, therefore, in the representation, though supported by such admirable acting, and did not run so many nights as the manager confidently expected."—Vol. i., p. 58.

As we have made few quotations from Mr. Home's poetry, we may observe that the description of an ominous dream in this play almost rivals in effect the celebrated vision in *Sardanapalus*.—

"*Æmil.* What evil omens has Cornelia seen?  
*Corn.* 'Tis strange to tell; but, as I slumbering lay,  
 About that hour when glad Aurora springs  
 To chase the lagging shades, methought I was  
 In Rome, and full of peace the city seem'd;  
 My mind oblivious, too, had lost its care.  
 Serene I stepp'd along the lofty hall  
 Embellish'd with the statues of our fathers,  
 When suddenly an universal groan  
 Issued at once from every marble breast.  
 Aghast I gazed around; when slowly down  
 From their high pedestals I saw descend  
 The murder'd Gracchi. Hand in hand the brothers  
 Stalk'd towards me. As they approach'd more near,  
 They were no more the Gracchi, but my sons,  
 Paulus and Titus. At that dreadful change  
 I shriek'd and waked. But never from my mind  
 The spectacle shall part. Their rueful eyes!  
 Their cheeks of stone! the look of death and woe!  
 So strange a vision ne'er from fancy rose.  
 The rest, my lord, this holy priest can tell."

The *Fatal Discovery* was brought out in 1769; but, as the prejudice against the Scotch was then general, and John Home was obnoxious, not only as a North Briton, but as a friend and *protégé* of the obnoxious Earl of Bute, Garrick prudently procured an Oxford student to officiate as godfather to the play. The temporary success of the piece brought out the real author from behind his screen. When Home avowed the piece, Garrick's fears were realized, and its popularity terminated; and we believe the most zealous Scotchman would hardly demand, in this instance, a reversal of the public judgment. Mr. Mackenzie has a more favourable opinion, upon more accurate consideration, perhaps, than it has been in our power to give to the subject. The play is written in the false gallop of Ossianic composition, to which we must avow ourselves by no means partial.

*Alonso* was produced in 1773, and was received with a degree of favour which, in some respects, it certainly scarce deserved. Home had, in this instance, forgotten a story belonging to his former profession, which we have heard himself narrate. It respected a country clergyman in Scotland, who, having received much applause for a sermon preached before the Synod, could never afterwards get through the service of the day without introducing some part of the discourse on which he reposed his fame, with the quotation, "as I said in my Synod sermon." In plain words, *Alonso* was almost a transcript of the situation, incidents, and plot of *Douglas*, and every author should especially beware of repeating the theme which has formerly been successful,

or presenting a *da capo rotta* of the banquet which he has previously been fortunate enough to render acceptable.

In 1778, Mr. Home's last dramatic attempt, the tragedy of *Alfred*, was represented and completely failed.

Home now turned his thoughts to another walk of literature. His connection with the civil war of 1745 had long been revolved in his mind, as a subject fit for history : he had even intended to write something on the subject soon after the broil was ended. After 1778, he seems to have resumed the purpose, and endeavoured to collect materials, by correspondence and personal communication with such personages as could afford them.

"In one or two of these journeys," says Mr. Mackenzie, "I happened to travel for two or three days along with him, and had occasion to hear his ideas on the subject. These were such as a man of his character and tone of mind could entertain, full of the mistaken zeal and ill-fated gallantry of the Highlanders, the self-devoted heroism of some of their chiefs, and the ill-judged severity, carried (by some subordinate officers) the length of great inhumanity, of the conquering party. A specimen of this original style of his composition still remains in his account of the gallant Lochiel. But the complexion of his history was materially changed before its publication, which, at one time, he had very frequently and positively determined should not be made till after his death, but which he was tempted, by that fondness for our literary offspring which the weakness of age produces, while it leaves less power of appreciating their merits, to hasten ; and, accordingly, published the work at London, in 1802. It was dedicated to the King, as a mark of his gratitude for his Majesty's former gracious attention to him, a circumstance which perhaps contributed to weaken and soften down the original composition, in compliment to the monarch whose uncle's memory was somewhat implicated in the impolitic, as well as ungenerous use, which Mr. Home conceived had been made of the victory of Culloden."

It is well for us, perhaps, that we have the advantage of telling the above tale in Mr. Mackenzie's language. We have great veneration for the memory of his author, and much greater for that of his late Majesty, whose uniform generosity and kindness to the unfortunate race of Jacobites was one of the most amiable traits of his honest, benevolent, and truly English character. But since Mr. Home did assume the pen on the subject of the Forty-five, no consideration whatever ought to have made him depart from the truth, or shrink from exposing the cruelties practised, as Mr. Mackenzie delicately expresses it, by some subordinate officers, or from execrating the impolitic and ungenerous use of the victory of Culloden, in which the Duke of Cumberland was *somewhat* implicated. Mr. Home ought either never to have

written his history, or to have written it without clogging himself with the dedication to the sovereign. There was no obligation on John Home to inscribe that particular book to his Majesty, and, had that ceremony been omitted, his Majesty was too just and candid a man to have resented the truth ; though there might have been some affront in addressing a work, in which his uncle's memory suffered rough usage, directly to his own royal person. On the whole, we greatly prefer the conduct of Smollett, a Whig, as well as Home, when he poured out his affecting lyric :—

" Mourn, hapless Caledonia, mourn  
Thy banish'd peace, thy laurels torn."

On being warned from making such an effusion public, the only answer he condescended to give was, by adding the concluding stanza.

The disappointed public of Scotland, to which the history should have been most interesting, was clamorous in its disapprobation. They complained of suppressed information and servile corrections ; but reflection induced critics to pardon the good old man, who had been influenced in his latter years by doubts and apprehensions, which could not have assailed him in his term of active manhood. The work was, indeed, strangely mutilated, and breaks off abruptly at the battle of Culloden, without giving us any account of the manner in which that victory was used. Other faults might be pointed out, chiefly such as are indicative of advanced years. The part which the author himself played in the drama is perhaps a little too much detailed and too long dwelt upon.

The history is, nevertheless, so far as it goes, a fair and candid one ; for the writer, though by the manner in which he had fettered himself he was debarred from speaking the whole truth, yet was incapable of speaking anything but the truth. The narrative is fair and honourable to both sides, nor does the author join with the sordid spirits, who cannot fight their enemies without abusing them at the same time, like the bailiff in Goldsmith's *Good-natured Man*. The idea which he gives us of the unfortunate Charles Edward is such as we have ourselves formed : the young Chevalier was one of those whom Fortune only distinguishes for a brief period of their life, the rest of which is passed in obscurity, so that they seem totally different characters when judged of by the few months which they spend in all the glare of publicity and sunshine, or when valued according to the many years which have passed away in the gloom of destroyed hopes and broken health. Other circumstances combine to render it difficult to obtain the real character of the unfortunate prince. By far the greater portion of his followers his memory was cherished as that of an idol, but the more dear to them on account of the sacrifices they had made to it. His illustrious birth, his daring enterprise, and the grace and beauty of his

person, went no small length in confirming his partisans in those feelings towards their leader. There were exceptions amongst them however. Some of those who followed Charles to France, thought that he looked cold on them, and the *Memoirs of Dr. King*, lately published, tend to confirm the suspicion that (like others of his unhappy race) he was not warmly grateful. His courage, at least, ought to be beyond suspicion, considering the manner in which he landed on an expedition so desperate, and the opposition to his undertaking which he met with from the only friends upon whose assistance he could have counted for the chance of bringing together 1500 or 2000 men. A few sentences on this subject from Home's Narrative will probably vindicate what we have said, and at the same time give a specimen of the historian's peculiar style, which, if neither flowery nor eloquent, as might have been expected from his poetical vein, is clear, simple, expressive, and not unlike the conversation of an aged man of intelligence and feeling, recalling the recollection of his earlier years.

To introduce these extracts, we must previously remark, that the chiefs of the Highland clans had come to a prudent resolution, that notwithstanding their attachment to the cause of the Stuarts, they should decline joining in any invasion which the exiled family might attempt, unless it was supported by a body of regular French troops. It was on the dominions (as they might then be called) of the Captain of Clanronald that Charles first landed. He did not find the chief himself, but he summoned on board the vessel which he brought with him to the Hebrides, MacDonald of Boisdale, the brother of Clanronald, a man of considerable intelligence, and who was supposed to have much interest with the chief. Boisdale declared he would advise his brother against the undertaking, remarking that the two most powerful chieftains in the vicinity, MacDonald of Sleate and MacLeod of MacLeod, were determined not to raise their men, unless the Chevalier should bring with him a sufficient foreign force.

"Charles replied in the best manner he could; and ordering the ship to be unmoored, carried Boisdale, whose boat hung at the stern, several miles onward to the main-land, pressing him to relent, and give a better answer. Boisdale was inexorable; and, getting into his boat, left Charles to pursue his course, which he did directly for the coast of Scotland; and, coming to an anchor in the Bay of Lochnanuagh, between Moidart and Arisaig, sent a boat ashore with a letter to young Clanronald. In a very little time Clanronald, with his relation Kinloch Moidart, came aboard the *Doutelle*. Charles, almost reduced to despair in his interview with Boisdale, addressed the two Highlanders with great emotion, and summing up his arguments for taking arms, conjured them to assist their prince, their countryman, in his utmost

need. Clanronald and his friend, though well inclined to the cause, positively refused ; and told him, one after another, that, to take arms without concert or support, was to pull down certain destruction on their own heads. Charles persisted, argued, and implored. During this conversation, the parties walked backwards and forwards upon the deck ; a Highlander stood near them, armed at all points, as was then the fashion of the country : He was a younger brother of Kinloch Moidart, and had come off to the ship to enquire for news, not knowing who was aboard. When he gathered from their discourse that the stranger was the Prince of Wales, when he heard his chief and his brother refuse to take arms with their prince, his colour went and came, his eyes sparkled, he shifted his place, and grasped his sword. Charles observed his demeanour, and, turning briskly towards him, called out, 'Will not you assist me?'—'I will, I will,' said Ranald ; 'though no other man in the Highlands should draw a sword, I am ready to die for you.' Charles, with a profusion of thanks and acknowledgments, extolled his champion to the skies, saying, he only wished that all the Highlanders were like him. Without further deliberation, the two MacDonalds declared that they also would join, and use their utmost endeavours to engage their countrymen to take arms. Immediately Charles, with his company, went ashore, and was conducted to Boradale, a farm which belonged to the estate of Clanronald."

The conversion of the good *Lochiel*, for whom some friendly Presbyterian drew up an epitaph, declaring he

—"is now a Whig in heaven,"

to this rash undertaking, shall be our last quotation from this history, so interesting in spite of its imperfections. This model of a Highland chief and Scottish gentleman met with the Chevalier at MacDonald of Boradale's, a very few days after he landed.

"The conversation began on the part of Charles, with bitter complaints of the treatment he had received from the ministers of France, who had so long amused him with vain hopes, and deceived him with false promises : their coldness in his cause, he said, but ill agreed with the opinion he had of his own pretensions, and with the impatience to assert them, with which the promises of his father's brave and faithful subjects had inflamed his mind. *Lochiel* acknowledged the engagements of the chiefs, but observed that they were no ways binding, as he had come over without the stipulated aid ; and, therefore, as there was not the least prospect of success, he advised his Royal Highness to return to France, and to reserve himself and his faithful friends for a more favourable opportunity. Charles refused to follow *Lochiel*'s advice, affirming that a more favourable opportunity than the present would never come ; that almost all the British troops were abroad, and kept at bay by Marshal Saxe, with a superior army :



that in Scotland there were only a few new-raised regiments, that had never seen service, and could not stand before the Highlanders ; that the very first advantage gained over the troops would encourage his father's friends at home to declare themselves ; that his friends abroad would not fail to give their assistance ; that he only wanted the Highlanders to begin the war.

"Lochiel still resisted, entreating Charles to be more temperate, and consent to remain concealed where he was, till he (Lochiel) and his other friends should meet together, and concert what was best to be done. Charles, whose mind was wound up to the utmost pitch of impatience, paid no regard to this proposal, but answered, that he was determined to put all to the hazard. 'In a few days,' said he, 'with the few friends that I have, I will erect the royal standard, and proclaim to the people of Britain, that Charles Stuart is come over to claim the crown of his ancestors, to win it, or to perish in the attempt ; Lochiel, who, my father has often told me, was our firmest friend, may stay at home, and learn from the newspapers the fate of his prince.'—'No,' said Lochiel, 'I'll share the fate of my prince ; and so shall every man over whom nature or fortune hath given me any power.' Such was the singular conversation, on the result of which depended peace or war. For it is a point agreed among the Highlanders, that if Lochiel had persisted in his refusal to take arms, the other chiefs would not have joined the standard without him, and the spark of rebellion must instantly have expired."—

It is singular that we should have to exculpate the unfortunate prince, who thus persisted, at the utmost risk, to instigate his followers, and to rush himself upon an undertaking so utterly desperate, from the imputation of personal cowardice ; and yet such is the fact. The strongest evidence on this point is that of the Chevalier Johnstone's *Memoirs of the Rebellion in 1745 and 1746*. These have been published under the care of a sensible and intelligent editor, who has done a great deal to throw light upon the subject, but has been occasionally misled into giving a little too much credit to the representations of his author, who wrote under the influence of disappointment and ill-humour. A great part of the work is very interesting, because Johnstone, having been a military man, and having some turn for observation, has made better professional remarks on the Highland mode of fighting, and mere tactics, than we have observed in any other work. But then we happen to know that some of his stories are altogether fictitious, such as the brutal piece of vengeance said to have been practised by Gordon of Abbachie, upon a Whig minister [Johnstone's *Memoirs*, 4to, 1820, p. 183]. It will also surprise such of the few readers as might have been disposed to interest themselves in the love affair between the Chevalier and his charming Peggy, which

makes such a figure in the conclusion of his work, to learn that Chevalier Johnstone was all this while a married man—an absolute Benedick—a circumstance which he nowhere hints at during his Memoirs, and that the amour, if such existed, was not of a character to be boasted of in the face of the public. There are legitimate grandchildren of the Chevalier Johnstone now alive.

James Johnstone, the father of the Chevalier, by courtesy of Scotland "*merchant* in Edinburgh," was a grocer in that city. Not that we mean to impeach his gentility, because we believe his father to have been of the ancient and once powerful family of Wamphray, though, like many sons of Jacobite families, he was excluded from what are called the learned professions, by his reluctance to take the oaths of the Hanoverian dynasty. Accordingly, the heir of the noble family of Rollo, who have been before allied with the Johnstones of Wamphray, did not derogate in marrying Cecilia, daughter of James Johnstone, grocer, as before said. But when the Chevalier talks big about his fears of being disinherited, we cannot but remember that a petty shop, such as shops in the Cowgate of Edinburgh were in 1745, indifferently stocked with grocery goods,

"Was all his great estate, and like to be."

In short, we suspect our friend the Chevalier to be somewhat of a gasconader, and we are not willing to take away the character of Charles for courage upon such suspicious authority. When we therefore find that this unfortunate prince is accused—*1st*, of having entered into this expedition without foreseeing the personal dangers to which he must be exposed,—*2nd*, of taking care, in carrying it on, not to expose his person to the fire of the enemy—*3rd*, of abandoning it when he had ten times more hope of success than when he left Paris, we are inclined to compare what the Chevalier has averred on these three points with what is elsewhere stated by himself and other authorities.

And, *first*—After reading the foregoing arguments used by Boisdale, Clanronald, and Lochiel, in order to detain the Chevalier, by the strongest representations in their power, from venturing on the expedition, the Chevalier may be censured for foolhardiness, but he cannot surely be considered as a person ignorant of the dangers of the undertaking—in other words, as one too timid to venture had he known the perils he was to encounter.

*Secondly*—That Charles avoided placing himself in such situations of personal danger as became a prince and a general, is inconsistent with what has been registered by almost all authorities, and with what is narrated by Johnstone himself. Beginning with the battle of Prestonpans, Home states, and we have heard it corroborated by eye and ear witnesses, that "Charles declared he would lead the clans on himself, and charge at their head;" and only relinquished his purpose when the general re-

monstrance of the chieftains deterred him from leading the van. But notwithstanding this precaution, the prince conducted the second line of the Highland army; and the Chevalier Johnstone tells us, that the battle was gained with such rapidity, "that, in the second line, when I was *still* by the side of the prince, we saw no other enemy on the field of battle than those who were lying on the ground killed and wounded, though we were not more than *fifty paces* behind our first line, running as fast as we could to overtake them." Now we submit, that a general who brought up a reserve within fifty paces of his advance, when, as Sir Lucius O'Trigger says, there was light enough for a long shot, and when the said advance was made upon a line of trained infantry and artillery, cannot be truly charged with keeping himself out of gun-shot. At Falkirk, we do not know exactly where the Prince was placed during the conflict, but it appears that he must have been in the advance, since at seven o'clock in the evening he led in person the troops which pursued the English army, and took possession of Falkirk at half-past seven at night, while the Chevalier Johnstone did not even know that the victory was won until half an hour later. In the whole course of this strange *levée des boucliers*, the Chevalier Johnstone accuses the prince of what he calls a childish desire of fighting battles, a propensity rather inconsistent with personal cowardice, especially in the circumstances of Prince Charles, as, according to our Chevalier's authority, orders were issued to kill him on the spot if he should fall into the hands of the Government troops.

At the battle of Culloden, the Prince remained upon an eminence, with a squadron of horse. But from what Johnstone states himself, he did give the orders necessary for the occasion; in particular, when he saw the English, and the Campbells their auxiliaries, about to force an enclosure which protected the right flank of his army, he "immediately repeated orders to place some troops in that enclosure, and prevent the manœuvre of the English, which could not fail to prove fatal to us. Lord George paid no attention to this order," and the English introduced both horse, musketry, and artillery into that enclosure, to attack the Highland right wing on flank and rear, and did so with such deadly effect, that they swept away whole ranks. This manœuvre completely broken the battle, and it was when the right wing was absolutely decided that Chevalier Johnstone proposes that Charles should have rushed down to renew the fight. This would, doubtless, have been the course to ensure a soldier's grave, but that, as is expressed in the last stanzas of poor Byron, is more "often found than sought;" nor are we entitled to praise the chief who rushes upon inevitable death because he has sustained a defeat. No effort of the squadron of horse, which was all that Charles had around his person, could dispossess the English cavalry, infantry, and artillery from the position

they had gained ; and as for rallying the Highlanders, why they *were* Highlanders, and for that very reason could not be rallied. In their advances, they fired their guns and threw them away, coming to the shock with the target and broadsword alone ; if they succeeded, which they often did, no victory could be more complete ; but they exhausted their strength in this effort, and it was not till they received, in the regiments drawn from amongst them, the usual discipline of the field, that Highlanders had any idea of rallying till some hill, pass, or natural fastness, gave them an advantage.\* It is very true, that Johnstone is supported on this point by a better evidence than himself—Lord Elcho, namely, who has left manuscript memoirs, in which it is stated that the author requested the Chevalier to charge in person at the head of the left wing, after the right was routed, and that on his not so advancing, Lord Elcho called him an Italian scoundrel, or a worse epithet, and declared he would never see his face more. We cannot believe, even on Lord Elcho's evidence, that any efforts of Charles could have retrieved the day at Culloden. The left wing, which had become sulky and refused to fight, because (to complete the blunders of the day) they had chosen to deprive the MacDonalds of their post of honour upon the right, were not likely to have their fighting mood improved by the rout and destruction amongst the right ; and it is nothing new for a warm and impetuous soldier like Lord Elcho, rendered desperate by circumstances, to give counsel on a field of battle which it would be madness in any general to adopt. Besides, the common ruin which succeeds to such a rash undertaking as that of 1745 breaks all the ties of friendship, and men become severed by their passions and interests, like a fleet driven from its moorings by a tempest. It is then that mutual upbraidings arise amongst them, and such quarrels take place as that betwixt Charles and Lord Elcho, which the latter carried to such a height, that though he lived an exile for the Stuarts' cause, he would never again see Prince Charles, and used to leave Paris so soon as the Chevalier entered it. Such strong passions are apt to sway, even in the most honourable minds, the recollection of past events.

This much is certain, that except the two authorities quoted, all persons who attended Charles that day agree in stating his desire to go down and rally the Highlanders, and affirm that he was only forced from the field by the entreaties of his tutor, Sir Thomas Sheridan, and others, representing the desperation of the attempt, and the impossibility of success. The cornet of the second troop of Horse Guards left a paper, signed with his name, in which he declares that

\* See the *History of the Highland Regiments*, by Major-General David Stewart (of Garth) ; one of the most interesting military memoirs in the world, and not the less so because the feeling of "*quorum pars magna fui*" is perceptible in every page."

all verbal representations would have been vain, if General Sullivan had not laid hold of the rein of Charles's horse, and turned him about. "To witness this," says the cornet, "I summon my eyes." After all, the words *Qu'il mourût* are pronounced with wondrous ease and effect; but the homely proverb, "While there is life there is hope," is not less likely to influence an individual in the situation of Charles; and if we are to accuse of cowardice every officer who has left the field of battle when all was lost, we shall wondrously curtail the catalogue of the brave.

As for the idea of rallying after the defeat, and making up a new army, it must be remembered that a Highland army differed essentially from one composed of regular troops, and as much in the mode of retreat as in other particulars. A regular army can have no retreat but upon that point where the general pitches his standard. The camp to them is country and home. If they are defeated, they are aware that their chance of safety lies in union, and all stragglers have sense enough to regain their battalions as soon as they can. The Highlanders would have been in the same situation had they been routed in the middle of England, where those who might have escaped the sword would have remained together for mutual protection. But on the skirts of their own mountains, the moment the day was lost, the Highlanders, in a great measure, dispersed. The individuals had their own homes to retire to, and their own families to protect; the tribes had each its own country to defend, and, when the Highlanders were defeated at Culloden, their army in a great measure broke up into the separate clans of which it was composed, which went off in different directions to their own several glens. Many, no doubt, were thrown into such confusion, that they made to Ruthven in Badenoch as a common place of rendezvous, and the Lowland troops went thither also, because it had been named as such, and because, being strangers in the country, they knew not where else to go. But Chevalier Johnstone talks widely and wildly when he speaks of five thousand Highlanders being there able and ready to resume the struggle. If the prince had not had the spirit (as Johnstone pretends) to have put himself at the head of such a body, the Highland chiefs themselves would have endeavoured to maintain themselves in arms, in order to enter upon negotiation, which they had been twice able to effect in former cases. But the whole is a vision. There was never above a thousand or fifteen hundred men assembled at Ruthven, and these were many of them Lowlanders. The prince's army was entirely broken up; all the foreign troops surrendered forthwith, with every thing belonging to the *materiel* of their army; the clans had in a great measure dispersed themselves and gone home, as was their uniform custom after defeat. All the efforts of their chieftains could not bring them together again. This *was* attempted, as the principal

actors entered into resolutions binding themselves to rendezvous for that purpose. But the spirit of the clans was entirely broken by the immense superiority of the King's forces, while the desire of defending each its own lonely glen from the fire and sword with which that was threatened, overcame the feelings of sounder policy which would have induced them to persevere in a system of co-operation. A full account of the attempt to re-assemble their forces, and of the causes of its being abandoned, will be found in Home's Works ; and we may conclude by observing that Lochiel, by whom the affair was managed, and who saw himself, by irresistible obstacles, constrained to abandon a course which might have at least extorted some terms from the Duke of Cumberland, was as brave a man, and, to say the least, as good a judge of what the Highlanders could or could not do in the circumstances, as the Chevalier Johnstone could possibly pretend to be.

We do not, on the whole, mean to arrogate for the unhappy Chevalier the character of a great man, to which he displays few pretensions ; but to deny energy to the prince who plunged into an enterprise so desperate, and where his own personal safety was so deeply implicated, on the word of one or two private and disappointed men, contradicted by a hundred others, seems to involve a denial of the whole history from beginning to end. He was not John of Gaunt, but yet no coward.

It is time to conclude this old-fashioned Scottish gossip, which, after all, in a literary journal of the present day, sounds as a pibroch might do in the Hanover Square concert-rooms.

THE END.



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